The Hindu Believes and My Master and I

Nath, Yogi Raushan

Note: This is not the actual book cover

THE HINDU BELIEVES
AND
MY MASTER AND I

YOGI RAUSHAN NATH

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CONTENTS

Introduction

Acknowledgements

Preface

Overview

Author's Note

An Appreciation

BOOK I

MY MASTER AND I

A Friend

My Master and I

BOOK II

THE HINDU BELIEVES

Lord Krishna Declares

I-NOW DHARMA-ITS ENUNCIATION

Invocation

Now Dharma: Its Enunciation

What is Dharma

Karma is Dharma

Ahimsa-Truth of It

The Human Spirit and Ahimsa

No Time for Prayer

A Promise of Deliverance

Moksha-A Friend's View

Moksha A Way of Life

II-NOW YOGA: ITS DIMENSIONS

The Eightfold Path of Yoga

Yoga Karmasu Kaushalam

Living the Yoga Way Sublime
Yoga in Everyday Life Four
Dimensions of Yoga A Letter A
Letter A Letter No False Sense
of Resignation Now a Sage-His
Credentials

III-NOW SHABDA: ITS DYNAMICS

Shabda: Its Dimensions
A Dialogue with God
Mantra-Its Dynamics
Who said Prayer
Go to the Temple
The Temple has a Mission
God-realization so Simple
What Makes a Saint
Saints in Transgressors' Garb
Riches No Bar
Sharing is Renunciation
Ancient Indian Thought
Why should Good People Suffer
Conscience: God's Word of Caution

IV-NOW OM! THE SACRED SYLLABLE

Now Om, the Pranava
Pranava as Sadhana
How I learnt Pranava Sadhana
Krishna Leela-Kundalini Awakening
The Symbolic World of Religion

The World of Symbols Again

Not Symbol but What It Symbolizes

Truth in Myth and Mythology

V-NOW CRISIS-THE JNANA (ज्ञान)

Now the Crisis

Crisis: Essence of Human Progress

Crisis-A Moment of Destiny

A Friend's High Time

A Letter

Crisis of Faith-Vasudeva's Moment of Truth

A Seeker's High Time

Crisis of Values-Tulsi Dass's High Time

A Crisis that was not

A Crisis that was

A Sinner's Moment of Truth

Chhajju Bhakta's High Time

India and Crisis of the World Conscience

VI-MAN AT THE CROSSROADS

Man at the Crossroads Man? Man-A

Miracle of the Creation Man on the

March It's the March that Matters

THAT I am-Man's Battle Cry

No Knowing what Man is Capable of

Man's Life-A Paradox and a Crisis

A Letter

Here is Your Man

Dharma-A Drive for Wholesome Growth

Man shall not Perish

A Letter

A Frank Word with Man

A Word of Cheer

VII-VISION OF A DYNAMIC FAITH

AND A LIVING TRADITION

A Letter Jnana-The Flaming Faith

The Integrated Surge Forward

Pranayama and Yoga Sadhana

Pranayama Mantra for Sadhana

Pranayama Mantra as Prayer

The Hindu A Hindu Believes The Ultimate of All Beliefs Break Down Barriers We Met, Shall Meet Again

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I should record my thanks to the friends who helped: Trilokji and Rajinderji took care of the manuscript at all stages. The paintings in the book are there because of Shri Ram Kumar's kindness And I am indebted to Shri Ram Nathji (of Rakesh Press) for cooperation and help. I may as well add that some parts of "From Darkness To Light" and the "Hinduism and Its Dynamism have been included inthe present volume. That makes it more comprehensive.

INTRODUCTION

Competence to express great spiritual truths is not every- body's forte, but it comes naturally to those who can be in tune with Him. Yogi Raushan Nath, the writer of "The Hindu Believes", belongs to the second category and is qualified to discover the spiritual reality underlying and uniting all apparently separate existents. His style supports the Latvian saying which he has quoted, i.e. "The language is a path of spirits on which a heart meets a heart." It is racy, intimate and unadorned He is alive to the fact that it fails to articulate the supreme truth in which case the "Voice of Silence" speaks. Like Aldous Huxley he is of the view that communication of the highest spiritual experience is not possible at the verbal level whereas at the non-verbal level it is more than possible.

About himself the author says: "I do not belong to any one particular religion or belief but I do respect all traditions known or unknown."

The fundamental and universal true concepts as brought out in the book don't have connotations limited to one particular religion. In fact, the author has categorically disfavoured the use of the word Hinduism for Hindu Dharma "whose tenets are eternally in consonance with the true Human spirit and man's higher aspirations. That is what makes it (Hindu Dharma) a religion of man for all time." Reference to the Maha-mantra (the Gayatri), with its highly suggestive English translation, together with powerfully meaningful extracts from the Vedas and the Gita successfully bring out the catholicity of the Hindu Dharma. In the section on "Hindu Believes", the author states that "to confine Hinduism to one homeland or another is a fallacy." Hindu Dharma is the universal way of life which transcends all barriers dividing man from man and the author gives a call to the aspirant thus: "Be true to your beliefs and religion till you outgrow the need for them and are in a blissful embrace of the Absolute, the One and Only." Furthermore, "To build a sound bridge between man and man, let the dedicated break down barriers which inhibit people from drawing spiritual nourishment from traditions other than their own.

The Hindu Dharma is an exponent of stout optimism and in the section on "Integrated Surge Forward", the author gives another call: "Live it all in solemnity and you will one day be man of vision and God-realization." The Hindu takes the entire world as a "blissful Lila".

The book bristles with thoughts which are both eloquent and ennobling and the sections on "The Temple has a Mission", "Yoga in Everyday Life", "Four

Dimensions of Yoga", "Man at Crossroads", "Pranayama Mantra as Prayer" irresistibly attract a reader's attention. A naive mind may find the book in places slightly mystifying but a reader gifted with a spiritual stance will find the entire book enjoyable and instructive. It has made the sublime theme reach one and all in a scintillating manner which conduces to a higher consciousness.

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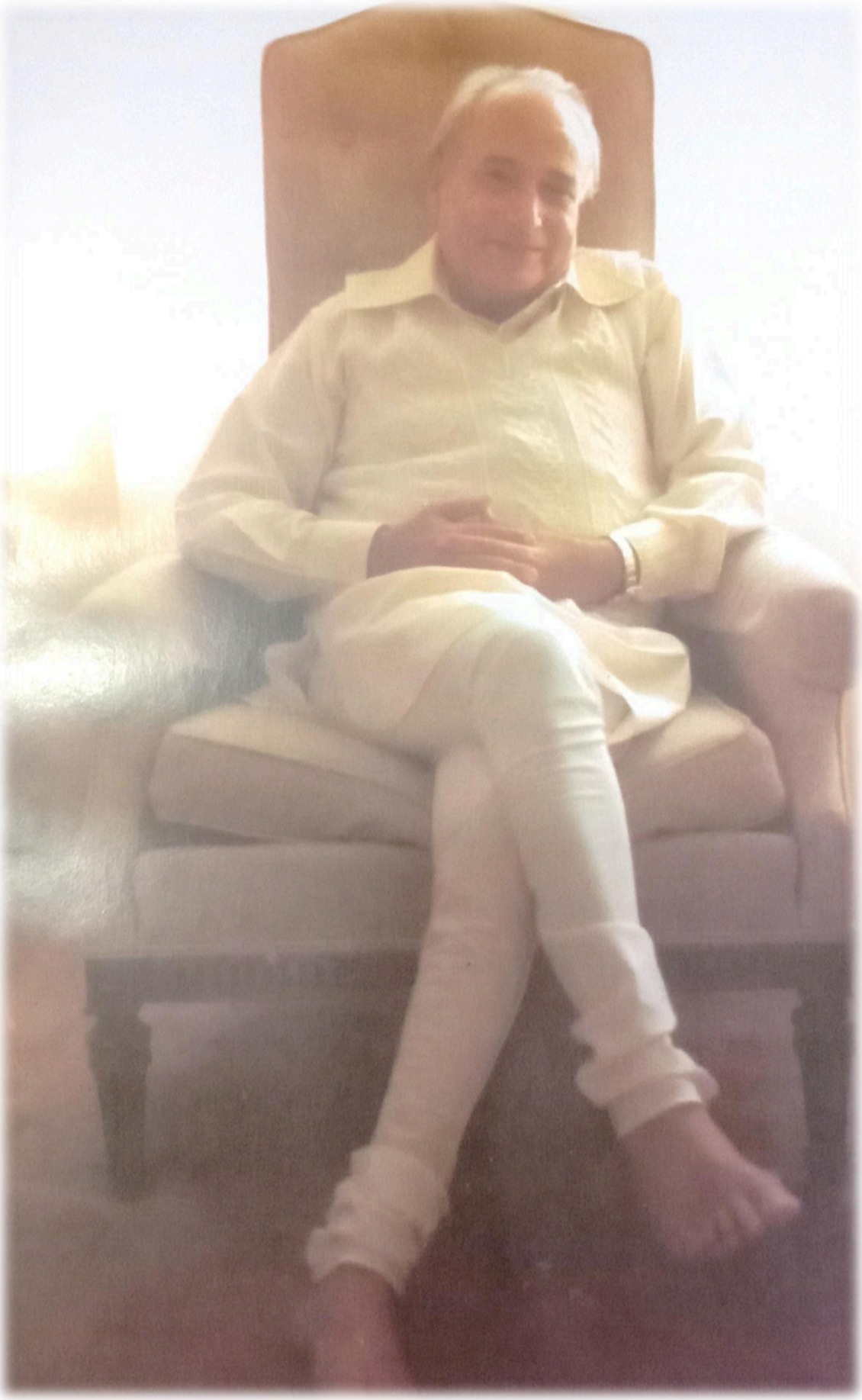

PREFACE

Sometime in the late fifties over a cup of tea: A friend handed over letters I wrote on occasions--in response or otherwise.

Baffled I wanted to say something but.....

"Your letters need a wider audience" he said.

Back at Delhi; another friend reached me: "I have mailed the letters you wrote..... they were helpful--may as well help others."

About the same time-out at Rishikesh Swami Sivananda- ji surprised me: "How about a discourse?"

"I better listen to your sermon sir," said I.

"Good enough--but to reach people you have got to beat your own drums," said the noble saint.

"Better expose yourself to winds and weather of the people for greater understanding. Isn't it the mission of your life to help others....." added Major General A.N. Sharma, sitting next to me.

Mystified I kept wondering till a chance encounter with an old teacher friend at Delhi. (We had first met as early as 1940 at Lahore, now in Pakistan.) Seeing a file in my hands he said: "What is this file about that you carry ?"

"Oh, that? These are the letters that I wrote to a young student over a period of years."

"A student? A student of Psychology that I myself am, I would like to read what you wrote....."

"I have my scruples, sir. What friends write and whatever I write in response is a sacred trust....." said I.

"How about giving no names, strictly keeping out personal matters? It is time you shared your experiences with a wider audience....."

With a wider audience? The words aroused curiosity,

interest too.

"But....."

My teacher friend cut me short and said: "I don't mind editing the whole stuff for you. Unless really worthwhile I won't send you to the press."

"Fair enough....."

"..... in your case things just happen. ..... Any way..... we will see.".....

From Darkness to Light was the first book that sent me inside a printing press. Everybody was helpful.
Before handing in the manuscript I myself read with interest Editor's Note by teacher friend--Principal R.R. Kumria; Introduction by Major General A.N. Sharma and Foreword by Swami Sivananda-ji Maharaj.

Of interest to me and worth pondering was what Sivananda- ji spelled out:

"The writer places himself in the position of the person he wishes to help and tries to understand the problem with an attuned mind. Then out of his deep experiences come the answers, the spirit flows out to help the flowering of a budding spirit.....'
The book got printed, published or whatever it is-- a personal affair altogether. To see myself in print was a good experience.
A press review appeared in THE HINDU (Madras). The book is not a sham--it is worth something ..... I felt assured, inspired.....and began to think of writing another.....

A chance meeting with an eminent statesman Dr. S. Radha- krishnan* cleared the decks. That was when I went along with friends to plead the cause of a yoga ashram.

Meeting over--as I walked past, suddenly the great scholar said: "Wait. The book? From Darkness to Light?
I read it ..... But where did you get it?"

"Sir, I wrote it."

"Did you? Sit down then."

For half an hour or so the great man discussed the book I had written. He knew more about it. Awed I sat ..... what- ever he said fired me, my interest, my inner being. He explained, elaborated also, what I had written to friends over the years. The power of the written word dawned upon me!

"At that time he was the Vice President of India. A few days later--received a personal letter from the distinguished author
permitting me to quote from his world- famed works. That was though the first and the last time we ever met, I gratefully remember him and his words: "Do not write for the sake of writing. The people world over are one people. Write for the sake of reaching them .....

OM! OM! OM!

Kaushan Nath

OVERVIEW

In December of 1930, the author of this book, Yogi Raushan Nath (Nath-ji), was a young college student in Lahore, as a result of his activities in the struggle for Indian independence from British rule, he was forced to flee to Jammu. While there, he met a revered Nath saint named Bawa-ji; the meeting changed the course of Nath-ji's life. He became a disciple of this great siddha purusha and when, in December 1935, Bawa-ji came to the end of his earthly existence, Nath-ji experienced a profound spiritual transformation and succeeded him as leader of this particular lineage of the Nath sect. Since then, Nath-ji has devoted his life to helping other men and women progress toward their spiritual goals. This volume contains a distillation of Nath-ji's experiences and his teachings over the past forty years; it is an invaluable guide for the seeker, and a rich repository of information about the yoga way of life.

The view of man which emerges from these writings is deeply compassionate and strongly affirmative. There is no attempt to romanticize or idealize man; his moments of weakness and wrongdoing are clearly acknowledged, and the ills of the world are attributed to man's failure as a human being. However, the themes of human potential and human dignity pervade the entire book; they express an implicit faith in the high destiny of man and are the natural result of a view of life based on dharma with its twin ideals of moral strength and social justice. Man is in process of mental, emotional and spiritual growth. Despite the constant reports of man's inhumanity to man and the ominous threat of nuclear destruction lowering on the horizon, Nath-ji's vision of man's future is clear and unequivocal: "Man will not perish. He shall instead endure." In fact, man is now coming into his own as a being "truly human and essentially divine."

The primary motivation for this book is to provide guidance which will assist individual men to make progress towards their high destiny. We are urged to strive until sublimity of character and nobility of outlook become a way of life. How do we do this? The very practical, down-to-earth advice is: "Pray and meditate and fearlessly do your allotted job." In another passage, the reader is told to live responsibly and act in good faith that God guides our footsteps. It is noteworthy that in each of these injunctions there is a double reliance on the grace of the Lord and on our own efforts. Both are necessary.

This general summons to right action, action in accordance with dharma, is supplemented by more specific guidance. One of the major contributions of the book is the detailed instruction provided for yogic sadhana. The yoga way of life,

based on the classical Eightfold Path, is seen as the most effective instrument for human progress. It gives man inner strength, helping him to face life in a balanced, healthy way; it helps man find his true vocation and leads, in the most natural way, to God-realization.

Central to the yoga way of life is yoga sadhana, culminating in meditation and samadhi. There is a careful description of the various stages of the Eightfold Path and of the significance of each stage. There are specific instructions for pranayama, for pratyahara, for the control of thoughts. Particular mudras are recommended and the meditator is cautioned against surrender to yoga nidra. In all these areas, the reader is provided with practical instructions in yoga. At the same time, Nath-ji does not impose a method; he simply describes his practice of sadhana and makes it available to the seeker.

The great strength of this volume is that it is written directly out of the author's own experience. Moreover, his guidance is available to men of all religions. As a yogi, he does not belong to any one particular religion or belief; he respects all traditions. Recognizing that men subscribe to many different faiths, he affirms that there is only one religion of man. From this ecumenical position, he calls on all seekers to break down the barriers which inhibit people from drawing spiritual nourishment from traditions other than their own, and he summons them to share their spiritual experiences as a way of building bridges between man and man.

The goal which lies at the end of the yogic quest has been given many names: moksha, Nirvana, self-realization, God- realization. But on two characteristics of the goal, the great teachers agree. The first attribute is Ananda, the bliss which is the sense of self-realization itself. The second is the Vedic Shantih or peace which Nath-ji so accurately describes as "creative serenity and dynamic tranquillity." It is toward this peace and this joy that the serious student of the book will be led.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Dear friend, Whenever somebody askswhatyouare,youmay,byallmeans, say: "I am a
Hindu." Need not fight shyofthewordHindu.Onceamereword, now it stands for whatever you are andwhateveryouaspiretobe.Restassured. Down the centuries, theso-calledhistoriclegendof"Sindhu and Hindu" has become an historic fact-that'sall.Disturbingitnowwouldcreate unnecessary controversy and confusion.However.Whenaqueryborders on to your faith-with a proud wave of handspellout:"TheDharmaIsubscribe to is SANATANA..'

Now sanatana is being timeless-referringorrestrictedtono particular period, timespace, or age. Whatyoubelieve,yourDharma,isatimeless beauty of a dynamic faith and a grandoldtradition.Itisforever,itisSANATANA (अनादि काल से चलाआरहा). MayGodblessyouwithcourage.faith, love and hope.

Here is a vedic down-to-earthprayer:

तेजोऽसस तेजोमयिधेदह।

वीमयसस वीयमयिधेदह।

बलमसस बलमयिधेदह।

ओजोऽस्जिो मयि धेदे ह ।

मन्युरिसिस मन्युमयिधेदह।

सहोऽसस सहोमयिधेदेह।

(जिुवि १६।६)

Tejo asi Tejo mayi dhehi!

Veeryam asi Veerya mayi dhehi!

Balam asi Bala mayi dhehi!

Ojo asi Ojo mayi dhehi!

Manyur asi Manyu-mayi dhehi !

Saho asi Saho mayi dhehi!

Vouchsafe I share with Thee Thy beauty, Thy splendour !

Vouchsafe I share with Thee Thy courage, Thy valour!

Vouchsafe I share with Thee Thy strength, Thy might and main !

Vouchsafe I share with Thee Thy vitality, Thy vigour divine!

Vouchsafe I share with Thee Thy gracious wrath, Thy ardour sublime!

Vouchsafe I share with Thee Thy universality,

Thy presence and prevalence absolute every where !

Raushan Nath

AN APPRECIATION

Hinduism is a vast and varied commonwealth of beliefs based upon the eternal principles of the Vedanta enunciated in the Upanishads and the Bhagawadgita. The sheer variety and diversity of the Hindu fabric has often confused people who do not grasp the underlying unity which holds the rich tapestry together. In my book RELIGIONS OF INDIA, I have in my essay on Hinduism, tried to give within a brief compass an overview of this great faith since its inception in the Vedas thousands of years ago right down to the present age.

One of the important points I have made in that essay is that the continued dynamism and vitality of Hinduism is due to the fact that its truths are reinterpreted and relived from generation to generation. THE HINDU BELIEVES well illustrates this phenomenon. In this thought-provoking book Yogi Raushan Nath has given us his interpretation of Hindu beliefs. Addressed to spiritual seekers, the book provides a fascinating glimpse into Hinduism in practice, dealing not so much with philosophical abstractions as with the day-to-day problems faced by seekers in the modern world. Hindusim has never been an exclusive religion. Indeed it is based upon the principle that divinity resides in the heart of every human being, thus knitting them into a single family. I am sure that this book will be of considerable interest to genuine spiritual seeker-Hindus as well as those belonging to other faiths.

Chanakyapuri,

New Delhi.

KARAN SINGH

BOOK I

MY MASTER AND I

A FRIEND

Whoever you are, unknown to me,
we are fated to meet, I know not when
but I hear a sound like a distant sea
deep in my heart; I sigh and then
like a radiant flame of myriad hue
my heart leaps up as I hear you call
from the distant hills, "O, where are you!"
I cry out aloud, but the echoes fall
on soundless wastes and no-one replies
though I strain my ears for the slightest sound,
and I stand alone in a world of sighs-
alone with the Friend I have not found.

Dr. Karan Singh

MY MASTER AND I

Though bubbling with a desire to narrate the various incidents of my life, I would prefer to relate how I met my Master, Shri Bawaji.

Those were the days of political turmoil-India fighting for freedom. Youngsters like me were stirred by the movement and inevitably drawn towards it. One day, an official came to me and said: "Beware of the agents-provocateurs.... Tell your friends that there are black sheep everywhere....We are as much concerned about the freedom of our motherland as they are.... Better go out of Lahore for a few weeks....I am a friend and no traitor to the nation's cause."

I believed him and left for Sialkot, (now in Pakistan), for no particular reason, just like that. There I met Nihal. We had been together at college. No questions were asked, for that was then the norm. We met and talked only about our college friends. Two days later, he came to me and said: "I have to go. ... Well, do you know someone in Jammu ?"

"My relatives..."

"Why put them to trouble? The police will be after them too," he cut in.

"Then ?"

"We will see."

It was December, 1930. Having spent two years at college, I had given up studies-though I had a mind to appear again for the examination as a drop-out.

I landed in Jammu with Nihal. At his instance, we went to the hostel of a privately-run engineering college. Nihal knew that someone from his hometown had joined that institution.

The tongawala deposited us at the foot of a staircase in Raghunath Bazar. We went upstairs and knocked at the door. A young man opened the door and said: "Well ?"

"Where is our friend from the North West Frontier Province ?" asked Nihal.

"Kundan ?"

MY MASTER AND I

"Yes. Where is he ?"

"He is not here. Never mind. Since you know him I will let you stay in his room."

The young man was from Assam and was the only student present in the hostel.

As we were settling down, Nihal said: "We are back in college though not our own."

For two days we roamed about the town. Nihal often went out alone while I stayed back. We also went to Udhampur and gate-crashed into the office of Harbans Bhagat, an advocate. Instead of throwing us out, he welcomed us and had a quiet talk with Nihal.

Next day, we were taken to a far off village where Nihal delivered a lecture. At night, he spoke while our host presided. I too exhorted the people to join the national struggle for freedom. Nihal was used to delivering speeches, I was not. I was however sharing the honour of being one of the 'leaders' from Lahore.

On the third day, we came back to Jammu. As we were passing through Kanak Mandi, a young man met Nihal. He took us to a room on the second floor of a nearby house.

Nihal joined the secret meeting while I waited outside. As we were coming downstairs, the young man said: "Shall we meet again?"

"Only God can tell," I said.

"Your God may or may not speak, but my God does speak. I will take you to Him."

"We are too young as yet-death can wait."

"But the foreign hangman's noose is rather in a hurry."

While we talked light-heartedly, an elderly person, Raja Ram, approached our new acquaintance and said:

"Haveli Ram*?"

"Yes, please."

"Are the two young men from Lahore ?"

"We are," said Nihal.

*Throughout you will hear about Haveli Ram. We called him Beli. He was a great devotee of Bawaji, my guru. His revered mother I will be referring to as Mataji. She was also deeply religious, kind- hearted and devoted to Bawaji. Alas, both of them are no more.

Raja Ram took us to his office nearby, and began: "Nihal, the police from across the state border are after your blood. But the local police are in no mood to help them."

"I am ready to go to jail," said Nihal.

"You are, I know; but we want to keep you out of trouble. Go to some unknown place for a day or two, and it will be all right."

As we came out of the office, we saw Haveli Ram waiting for us.

"So we meet again," he said.

"We do. But I have been advised to leave the town," said Nihal.

"I understand. Why not come to my village? There you can stay without anybody knowing it."

"We will see," said I.

"Let us go. We will leave in an hour," said Nihal.

"How about conveyance ?" I asked.

"That is my concern," said Haveli Ram.

The Unseen Hand had had its way. Providence has its own way of doing things.

On the way to the village, Beli and Nihal began to talk about saints and sadhus. As I had never met any, I kept quiet.

We reached Haveli Ram's village late in the night, badly shaken. His tonga had given us a rough ride.

Next morning, he took us around the place. As I still felt fatigued, I followed them listlessly. Presently, we came across a cottage, away from the village.

While Nihal stood by his side, Beli knocked at the door. When nobody responded, Nihal called out: "Please open the door. We have come all the way from Jammu." From inside the cottage, someone said: "It is not true. You have not come from Jammu but from Lahore."

"True," he said, "but..."

"Your hometown is Bannu and your friend here hails from Gurdaspur."

Nihal's hometown was Bannu (N.W.F.P.). Bawaji was right in my case too.

"Beli ! What are they doing here? Let them go back to Lahore." Once again Beli knocked and Nihal pleaded for admittance. At last, a very tall person opened the door and they stepped in. I stayed back.
Later I too walked in.

As I entered, I saw them sitting by the fireside on the verandah. Instead of joining them, I sat down in the open courtyard to bask in the welcome sunshine. At first, I felt indifferent-but not for long. As soon as the stranger began to talk about the same saints who had figured in our discussion the previous evening, I felt intrigued....

Athrill and athrob that is how I suddenly felt when the most wonderful man called out: "Raushan, why are you sitting at that end ?"

(How could a stranger possibly know my name ?)

Before I could say something, the voice demanded :

"Raushan! Will you come again?"

Despite the shaking and utter surprise, I got up and said casually: "I do not know."

Then the great seer added: "A blind* fakir that I am-who cares?"

Mystified, I walked out of the most remarkable presence.

For years the words that Bawaji uttered haunted** me like anything. Then and there they crashed right through my listlessness and set me ablaze.
The words? I heard them whenever I sat on, all by myself, into the small hours.
I heard them as the boisterous days dawned, full of hope, lively and glad, and looked ahead. I heard them whenever a happy-go-lucky hour of the day tried to go astray, sometimes abashed, sometimes given to a gay abandon. And I heard them too, as they swept past the madding shadows of my sulking evenfalls.

The words! I saw them baffle the hush of many a disillusioned twilight. I saw them try and assuage the uneasy quiet

*Because of old age, Bawaji had lost his eyesight but he could see. While leading the way I used to stumble in the dark but he did not. **I wish I had a better word. Bawaji's words stayed, they endured, they echoed and re-echoed and they overwhelmed me.

of many a desolate night. And, so many times, they sent me out, running wild, like one possessed, through the thinning crowd of late-night ramblers.

Whether wilderness howled, silence screamed, or the milling crowds roared--

Bawaji's words always challenged attention, demanded me. Not that I heard them all the time, whether day or night, but I did hear them off and on and on most unexpected occasions : Alas! Even in the midst of youthful exuberances, they would often call me by my name and say: "Raushan! What are you doing here?"

Because of the words and otherwise too, I often felt terribly unquiet and on fire.....

On fire? Ah, that reminds me. Once-while interviewing me for a job, one Mr. Verma said: "Young man! You are afire. The fire is in your eyes. No more wishful thinking, nor fool's errands any more. Run! Run on to wherever you truly belong- a girl of youthful charm, a man of God, or the Lord Himself."

As I got up to go, he added: "Yours is a case of a lost child. What you need is no job, no worldly gain. No earthly joy can hold you for long. Quest, quest and quest till you find your true vocation, identity too.

"Now do not waste time, nor flounder about. Leave your ungainly haunts and go!"

A timely warning...otherwise I might have allowed the vicissitudes of life to play havoc with my quest of the Ultimate....

The same day we came back to Jammu.

While going up the (hostel) staircase. Nihal turned round and said: "I feel like going back to Bawaji."

"Now better think of sleep," said I, and added in jest, "Nobody is going to arrest you at this hour."

"Both of us are under arrest, my dear friend. Bawaji calls you-perhaps me too. He is a great yogi."

"Yogi or no yogi, I would like to rest."

I do not remember what time it was when he woke me up and said: "Let us go."

"Go ahead, if you like. I have to get my clothes washed."

"Here, take my shirt. I shall give you a dhoti too. You have your woollen coat. Now be a good boy and get ready."

So, I had to go.

Before leaving, I noticed a small bamboo stick lying in the room. I picked it up and followed Nihal downstairs. He saw the stick in my hand and said: "Too small to scare a mouse even. Why not put it on your shoulder as a shikari would carry his gun? Let me tie the lunch packet to it."

It was cold. The night was dark. A part of the journey was through Nag Bani, a reserve forest. No tigers there, only wild cattle. On the way, twice we lit a fire to warm ourselves.

More than ten miles on foot and we reached the cottage- Bawaji's Kutia. As it was not daylight yet, we sat down to relax. I must have dozed off, for it was some time after sunrise when I heard Nihal calling: "Come and meet Bawaji."

I woke up and looked around. Mataji* was standing in the doorway. She smiled as I walked past her carrying, on my shoulder, a bamboo stick with the lunch packet tied to it. I was wearing a dhoti, a white shirt and a woollen coat. Later, once Mataji told me that I looked like that in the vision which she saw, many years before I was born.

It was March 1931, and a large house on Elgin Road, Calcutta. I was staying with my friends. There I was suddenly taken ill with a strange disease, some skin trouble apparently. If I went out in the sun, my whole body would burn; and there would be blisters all over. Not only daylight, even electric light disturbed, so I had to shut myself in a darkened room. I could stir out a little only after sunset. As even animated talk would affect me, I spoke only when I had to and that too in subdued tones. Silence helped.

Since I had nothing to do, I took to praying. Rather it was a takeover. Earlier I had never been particular about prayers. Forced seclusion and silence gave me a strange sense of urgency-hard to define.

~~Haveli ram mot~~her.

I started feeling different. My aspirations-even apprehensions - underwent a change. I did feel the difference, but could do nothing. As soon as I felt a little better, I came back to Lahore-a changed person.

For no apparent reason, I lost interest in college studies. Instead of attending classes, I used to go to a garden nearby. There I would be lost in thought, maybe meditation. No idle soliloquies, definitely something meaningful. And no ebbing away of zest for life-I was full of it and in love with it.

Soon wanderlust became a sort of way of life-an urge to get up, dress up, and go out. I would hurry out as though to keep an appointment.

Beaming with joy and full of verve, I often could not help smiling. At times I felt awfully sad for no apparent reason. At other times I would crave for a friendly company.... (Thus I passed the days and nights. My destiny could lay anchor where it would.)

At last the college closed for the summer break and I found myself at Duggal, a remote place.* Mandi Bahauddin, the nearest railway station, was 17 miles away. Again I was in for a spell of silence and solitude. Providence had forced upon me a life like that so that I could get used to it.

For many an hour I would shut myself in a lonely cottage. There I would do one thing or the other. Whatever I felt like doing was, in fact, yoga sadhana. Now I know but at that time I had no idea.

One day Sadana, the caretaker, asked me: "Do you practise some black magic, or are you after some supernatural power**?**

"How do you know?"

"The other day I saw you meditating in a room of the cottage. You were covered all over with black ants. That frightened me."

I had no idea what I practised when alone-however it was certainly not black magic.

*That is where my parents lived at that time. **To my mind, there is nothing supernatural. That we call supernatural with which we are not familiar. Can nature ever transcend itself?

Except for a short break now and then, I often meditated the whole day undisturbed. Only late in the evening I had my meal.

At night, I got restless. I would drop down from the terrace and run, as if possessed, to a nearby sandy wilderness. There I would fall on my knees, close

my eyes, fold my hands, and pray in all solemnity. Shattering the lonesome desolation, my call would sometimes ring out: "O, Ye, Unknown!

Where art Thou?"

Unquiet twilights found me pacing up and down. Sometimes I would pause, look up, and sob out: "I await Thee, my Lord,"

On moonlit nights I gazed at the moon while doing mantra japa. Many a time I felt as if wrapped up in an unknown presence and called out: "Just one word, O, my Almighty God,"

Mornings and evenings, I would gaze at the sun-just as I gazed at the moon, a steady stare. There, on those burning sands, sometimes I would sit, stand, or lie down and do some sort of sadhana, the way it came. No burns, no blisters, even when it was hot. How could I do that? I myself have been asking this very question all these years. (I will not advise anybody to do like that. Surya Namaskara is good enough for the students of yoga.)

I have already narrated how I met Bawaji, my Master, for the first time. Now let me relate how I met him a second time.

It was at Duggal, the summer holidays, and the year 1931.

I was young, unquiet and as restless as the restless sea. The cause of restlessness I did not know. That made me all the more uneasy.Strange thoughts used to cross my mind. Though I had yet to find my faith, I used to sort of meditate. The only mantra that I knew then was the Gayatri; and I used to recite it.

Whether I recited the Gayatri or just sat with eyes closed, it did give me a sense of comfort and peace.

One day, after a few hours of meditation alone, I came back home. Inside, near the doorway, I saw a post card lying on the floor. Casually I picked it up and glanced through it. Though addressed to my father, there was a word for me, too. "I went to see Bawaji...he remembers you."

Overcome by a strange sense of urgency, I started packing my things. Suddenly I was startled by a heartrending cry. It was my mother. My father was very ill. Another piteous cry! I must hurry and attend to my ailing parent.

Standing in the doorway, I saw dear father lying unconscious, a deathly pallor on his face. Dead? Oh! No! No!

Casually I walked out of the house...Anxious inquiries from our neighbours: "How is your father?" They offered help. No time to call in a doctor. The hospital was three miles away. So, four men raced, carrying him on a stretcher. Taking my suitcase, I went along with them.

The hospital at last. The doctor was in. Soon he was attending to the patient. I knew him. We were friends. He was a God-fearing man.

"Is it all right, Doctor?"

"We are late by a few hours."

"Then ?"

"God will help."

"He shall."

"Why don't you pray?"

"But-"

"Why talk about God then ?"

There was anxiety in his voice. He looked concerned. "All right," I responded.

"I wish you had a guru to turn to."

Hard to recall what happened next.....The attendants rushed about. My father was taken to Room No. 2-that I remember.

Not long after, instead of looking after my ailing father, I found myself riding a bus* on my way to Mandi Bahauddin,

*As I write, I myself am surprised at my callousness. No sane person would have done that but I did it. Can't hazard any explanation. I would be bragging if I say: "I did it for the love of God or my guru." Nothing of the sort. It happened so. Maybe, Providence wanted it.

the nearest railway station. The moment I arrived, I saw a train steaming in. Before I knew it, I found myself boarding it.

The train turned out to be the right one and I reached Jammu the same day-though late in the night.

The train steamed into the Jammu Tawi railway station at about eleven in the night. The sudden halt jolted me out of my reverie. As it was too late to go to

the Kutia where Bawaji lived, I decided to go to my kinsman who had written : "I went to see Bawaji....He remembers you."

Next day, while still in bed, I felt unwell. The burning sensation had suddenly reappeared-though not as acute as it was in Calcutta some weeks before. Somehow I got up and was moving about when my host came in and said: "So you got the message ?"
"Oh, yes."

"Bawaji was very keen on seeing you."

"That is why I am here."

"How about the conveyance ?"

"Last time, when I went to him with Nihal and one Haveli Ram, we travelled by a tonga right up to the Kutia."
"Not now. Bawaji lives at another place called Phallora. A tonga will take you along the canal bank up to Damana. From there you will have to walk quite some distance."

"How about going on a bicycle ?"

"That is a good idea. I will find you one."

Though rather early in the day, I felt warm from pedalling my way to the Kutia. The burning sensation was too much to bear. Now and then I had to stop for respite. Once I felt so very uncomfortable that I jumped into the canal with my clothes on. I had not pedalled very far when I could stand it no longer. Stopping under the indifferent shade of a tree, I closed my eyes, bowed low and said: "Bawaji."

No prayer-just said so.

I at once felt better and my eyes turned skywards. A stray cloud was up there.

I walked a few feet, then a few yards. No burning sensation at all. A miracle! As I moved, the cloud also moved with me. All the while I was under its heavenly canopy.

Soon I started pedalling on to Phallora-hesitant at first, then at full speed. How distinctly do I remember the cool comfort of the moving shadow of that solitary patch of cloud overhead!

With childlike impetuosity and gay abandon, I knocked at the door of the Kutia. Bawaji himself opened the door and said: "You did well to come away. Now come in."

As I sat down by the fireside, he asked: "How about your lunch?”

"Please don't bother. I carry it with me," I said.

"I knew it. You don't want me to cook for you."

"Next time, please," I said.

I looked around. A flag was fluttering high, out in the courtyard. Beside the flagstaff was a brickwork shrine-the Thari* (). Bawaji's Kutia had two rooms which opened on to a verandah. At one end of the verandah, a fire was burning in a shallow pit. And both of us were sitting near this fireplace.

After some time I felt hungry. As I came out, I saw a black spaniel lying under the shade of a tree. It wagged its tail. I patted it on the back and said: "Move on, please." The dog moved away. The moment I sat down I was lost in deep thought-maybe meditation.

Late in the evening-As I struggled back to consciousness, I had a feeling that Bawaji had called me. I opened my eyes. By my side was the black spaniel, its head lying in my lap. Bawaji called again.

As I entered the Kutia, Bawaji asked: "Would you like to go ?"

"I should make a move now," I said

"Will you come again ?"

*Thari is a mystic symbol: a yantra. I never asked Bawaji nor did he ever elaborate its signi

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"I shall try," I said.

As I mounted the bicycle, I saw the lunch basket tied to the handle-unopened.

Next morning my host was surprised to see me dressing.

"Where are you going?"

"To the Kutia."

"Did Bawaji ask you to come again ?"

"Today I have to take my lunch with him."

"You are lucky." "I won't be long," I said. As I opened the front gate, which was some distance from the living room, I saw four strangers waiting outside.

"Well ?"

They hesitated at first, then said: "We have come to meet a sadhu."

"Please go right into the house and inquire. I have no idea."

They walked in. I followed.

As if under some spell, I went back to my room, changed my clothes, covered myself with a wrap and went straight to the drawing room. The four strangers had come in and were sitting quietly. I too sat down cross-legged on the floor and started delivering a sermon.

Some time later-a sudden jerk as if to break the spell- and I came to !

As I entered my room, there was a click. I looked back. My niece, hardly seven, had locked the door. Her little friends giggled as they came out from hiding.

"Open the door, Indu," I said.

"Uncle, you can't go," said an impish little girl in a well- rehearsed manner. "You will have to eat now," commanded another.

For 17 days I spoke regularly on the yogic way of life. I taught them to practise it also. How to live it? That takes a lifetime to teach and a long time to learn. You learn as you progress.

On the eighteenth day, after coming back from the Kutia, I suddenly remembered: "Ah! That day I left my father on his deathbed."

When I told my host about it, he said: "You can still catch the train, hurry up."

I reached the railway station, the platform; the train was yet to arrive from the railroad yard. I spotted someone-just an acquaintance and no more. I had a faint impression that he was a scholar. I walked up to him and straightway began to talk about yoga. He kept smiling, while I spoke. I thought he was impressed by my learned talk. With a rather proud wave of my hand, I ended up with: "Man! I have become a mahatma now."

Walking on air and still in a mood to deliver sermons, I tried to clap him on the back. But he caught hold of my hand, held it tight, and said: "Young man ! Enough of giving yourself airs. To learn the ancient lore, you need another hundred years, even more." I looked at him, surprised. He patted me on the back and added: "Go and talk about physics and chemistry." Then he walked away, leaving me perplexed and feeling not a little foolish.

Slowly I realised my mistake. I should have behaved.

Meanwhile the train had steamed in. Before I could get into the compartment, some people arrived to see me off. They offered flowers and garlanded me.

As the train steamed out of the station, I stood at the doorway, waving farewell.

Before the train took a sharp turn, I thought I saw the scholar walking along the track. He was there. In the gathering dusk, I had another look. Bawaji ! Yes, it was he and no one else. The same bearing. I recognized him. To have another look, I craned forward. Now nobody was there!

There were others in the compartment. Seeing me excited, one of them clapped me on the back and said: "Young man, take your seat." As I sat down, he asked: "Are you going abroad? So many people had come to see you off."

I was not going anywhere. I was going to the hospital where I had left my ailing father.

The train brought me back to Mandi Bahauddin. It had been a rough journey.

From the railway station, I rushed to the bus stand. There were more passengers than usual, but the driver offered me a low stool near his seat. As I sat down, the kindly man asked me : "Are you comfortable, son ?" I looked away to hide my tears.

I looked around. No familiar face I could turn to. Hardly 14 miles to go, but it looked as if the bus would never make it.

At last, I found myself climbing the steps.* I was on my way to the hospital. Some people were coming down. Apprehensions crowding in upon me-up the steps I was going-and at every step I was preparing myself to hear the worst.

The hospital at last. Dismayed I stood to catch the doctor's eye. I waited for him to get up and blast me for what I had done.** He was busy attending to the patients. Suddenly he looked up and smiled-but was busy again.

Presently, Neena, the doctor's dear little child ran up to me and pulled my arm. Caught unawares, I fell down-baggage and all. The doctor looked up and burst out laughing. (Though strange but it is true. Whenever somebody falls others laugh.) As I staggered back to my feet, he asked:

"What are you doing here? Go and meet your father."

The Private Ward. Room No. 2? Nobody there. Perhaps my father had been shifted to another room. How about Room No. 3? I moved on to the next one, and opened the

*The hospital was on top of a mound, a flight of stairs leading to it. **What I had done was right or wrong, it is difficult to say. Normally I would not have done it. Still
sometimes things do happen which are hard to explain.
I have learnt from experience: So long as a person is sincere and he acts in
good faith, it's all right.
His action shall merit grace, both human and divine. Hence-instead of making comparisons, it is
better to aspire to sincerity of purpose and plan. No use arguing whether a
spirit of sacrifice or that
of revolt is to be preferred. To my mind whatever serves God's purpose or
helps some human cause
is laudable.

door a little, a little more...My father was there. Alive! No apologies. No explanations-no occasion for them. Not a word! At last he said:

"So you have come!

What about mother?"

"She should be back any moment. The doctor says.."

"I'll go and ask him," I said.

As I turned to go, I stumbled. Neena, the doctor's little daughter, had brought in her wooden horse. It was in the way. My father helped me to my feet. He could do it. As I stood clinging to him, the doctor came in.

"Glad to see the father and son meet. But when are you leaving? We need the room for another patient."

Before leaving the hospital, I met him on the quiet and told him all about my Jammu visit.

"So...you made fun of me whenever I talked about my guru. Now you know what it is when the Call comes."

Before I could speak, he went on: "The farther you travelled, the better your father felt-minute by minute, hour by hour. Next morning, he was safe-his life spared."

Next morning? Well-That morning I was on my way to meet my Master in the real sense.

One day, in the last decade of the 19th century, a man and a woman were seen climbing a mound of large dimensions. After some time, the man stopped. His wife had lagged behind. However, she soon caught up with him.

On reaching the top, they spotted a shrine in the open. It was the samadhi* of Bawa Birpa Nath**. (The samadhi is there even today. It is as old as the mound*** that it crowns.)

*The yogis belonging to the Nath Sect are not cremated but buried. The grave of a yogi is called a samadhi.

**Bawa Birpa Nath was the first in the line to which I belong. His life story is fascinating. I have
often heard it being narrated by the local minstrels.

***This mound is known as Kalali Ka Tibba. The river Tawi flows to south-west of it, and it is about
13 miles from Jammu. I went there for the first time in 1935 at Bawaji's instance. And it was there that some one sang for me the whole story. Later, I heard it being sung by others too. Underneath
the mound lies buried an ancient town. The tragedy

The man and woman were surprised to see an earthen oil- lamp burning in the open, unsheltered. The incense was smouldering in a bowl. Its fragrant smoke was being wafted all around by a strong wind. A saffron-coloured flag fluttered in the air. After flying straight for sometime, it drooped--as if seeking grace from the sacred shrine. Having paid their respects, the man and the woman wended their way towards a thatched hut.

"Bawaji's Kutia ?" the woman asked.

"Very likely," the man said.

"Maybe, he is sitting in Dhyana."

"Let us go in and see. The smoke is coming out of the thatched roof, it might catch fire."

Through a gap in the hedge that ran around the hut, they found their way into the Kutia compound. The devotee pushed the door ajar. As they entered the

smoke-filled room, the smouldering fire suddenly burst into a joyous flame. In its light they saw some earthen pots and a wooden rake. A pair of tongs stood stuck in a heap of ashes.

After a while, they heard something fall with a thud. They came out and saw a stalwart man, over six-foot tall, standing near a stem of a tree-branches and all.

"Bawaji !" the woman exclaimed.

Awe-struck, they bowed low. He blessed them both and said: "Go and seek Bawa Agya Nath's* blessings."

"We have already met him and he has guided us on to you."

Now this was Bawaji, my Master. The man and woman were Faqir Chand and his wife Karma Devi. Out of respect we call her Mataji**, the Mother. They had gone to meet

has something to do with Birpa Nath's life. That was more than a thousand years ago, maybe more. *Bawa Agya Nath lived near the mound. The place is still intact and is being looked after by a Nath yogi. People living in the nearby villages remember him still. Bawaji was ~~initiated into the~~ Nath Sect by him in 1895 or so. **Mataji was born in August 1877. She was married in the ~~year 1884. Accompanied by her husband Faqir~~ Chand she went to see Bawaji in 1895. In March 1917, Bawaji shifted to the Kutia, built for him by

Bawaji for the first time. (Alas, they are no more.) Their son, Haveli Ram, took me to Bawaji in December 1930, for the first time.

And it was here on this very mound that Mataji had seen me in a vision nine years before I was born - carrying, on my shoulder, a bamboostick with a lunch packet tied to it.

Look yonder! Two men are struggling hard to keep them- selves astride the floats, their sarnahs*. For all we know, they might have come to save the man over there-He is standing, immersed up to his chin, in swirling river waters. Who is he? Let us see what our daring friends have to say.

"He is a siddha purusha, a great yogi. We dare not disturb him, nor ask questions. He never comes to our village, not even for a pinch of salt. Not long ago, we met him just by chance.

"One day, while keeping a watch over the timber floating down the river, we saw a column of smoke rise-over there, from that bela**.

"We swam across on to the bela. As we were going through the wild growth, suddenly we came across an awesome sight. While all around him was burning fire, the man over there sat, eyes closed, in deep meditation. Awe-struck we stood at some distance and watched.

"At last the sun went down and the fire died away. The yonder man opened his eyes and looked around. Picking up courage, we went up to him and paid our respects. He blessed us and said: 'I want to be left alone. Never come here again.'

"That was in summer. It is winter now.. Every day he stands like that in the icy cold waters. Believe it or not, he is

and her husband, near their village. After the year 1928, she spent most of her time in the village. During this period (1917 to 1935), Bawaji used to go and stay at other places also ; but he always came back and stayed in the same Kutia. It was there in that Kutia that I first met Bawaji.

*A sarnah is an inflated buffalo skin. It floats.

**A bela is a small wooded river-island.

a man of miracles. The other day he saved our lives just by a wave of his hand. But for his miraculous powers we would have been swept away by the flooded river..."

That is how once two villagers introduced themselves to me as Bawaji's greatest admirers. It was sometime in 1940. I could not possibly disbelieve what they said, for village folk are usually simple-hearted and they seldom tell a lie about a man of God. When asked about the village they came from and the year when this happened, one of them said: "Our village is situated right on the banks of the river Chenab and is not very far from your Kutia. The year? Alas, we, village folks, have no idea of a date or the year unless we have to appear in some law court for some offence or as a witness for someone."

A year hence, maybe two, I happened to meet them again. Seeing my keenness to know more about Bawaji, one of them narrated: "It was long, long ago and I was young. One day, standing on the bank of the flooded river Chenab, my friend here and I saw the already mentioned bela under water; the tree-tops were barely visible. That was the worst flood in the memory of the oldest man living.

"Suddenly we were reminded of Bawaji and, in order to bring him over to our village for safety, we plunged into the river. Caught up in a current, our sarnahs were swept away on to where Bawaji was sitting on the top of a tree. He waved at us and we waved back.

"By God's grace..."

At this point, the second villager became so excited that I had to ask the first one to let him speak.

"Believe it or not, our sarnahs floated back straight to our village as if they were two motor boats...."

The first one resumed: "Despite our earnest pleas, Bawaji did not take his food, nor did he allow us to light a fire for him. However we built for him a small hutment on the outskirts of our village.

"After three or four days, he wanted to go back. The flood waters had by that time receded. We offered and he agreed to our accompanying him.

"While going through the flooded fields, we stumbled now and then. He did not. Even while crossing the river, it was as if he was wading through only knee-deep waters. For us however, it was a matter of swimming across or getting drowned.

"At last we reached the bela. The flood waters had receded but there were pools and puddles everywhere. No trace of Bawaji's Kutia but, at one place, a flagstaff stood sporting a saffron-coloured (gerua) flag. Nearby lay an uprooted tree all tangled up with driftage.

"As we stood wondering, Bawaji sat down near a slightly raised ground and started digging into it. Lo, a heap of ashes bared, with a wooden rake and a pair of tongs lying nearby. Suddenly we saw smoke.

"To our utter surprise Bawaji dug out a smouldering piece of firewood. A miracle! Even a river in spate could not put out the fire of a yogi's Dhuna*."

This was Bawaji, my Master, my guru. Ever since I first met him in 1930, I have been hearing people talk of him, his kindness and of his miracles. I can't say why, but usually we talk of the saints in terms of the miracles they perform and the difficulties they face.

Nobody could tell me when Bawaji was born and where he belonged. The oldest man, who was himself 92 in 1935, could tell me only this much that he was hardly six or seven when he first met Bawaji.

"Bawaji was very tall and, at that, time, he wore his hair long-so very long that it touched his ankles. Even then he looked what he looks today."

That is what he told me when I went to deliver Bawaji's message to him on the twentyninth of December 1935. What the old man told-gave me no indication of Bawaji's age. Once, in reply to my direct question, he remarked: "I am not a day older than you are."

*Dhuna is the fire that Nath Sadhus keep alive in a shallow pit-for warmth and worship.

Bawaji used to have only one meal a day, simple food. Though he never claimed to be a learned man, once people heard him discuss religion with a scholar. At the end of the talk, the scholar remarked: "I have yet to meet someone more learned than Bawaji."

However, to the villager he was just a 'Bawa'-a recluse. He went to him with his simple problems. A little prasada (holy gift) would cure his cow. Bawaji's blessings would restore him to health.

Bawaji had a great sense of humour. Once two thieves took away whatever there was in the Kutia. Before they left, Bawaji threw on to them another blanket. He was feigning sleep. They were happy to have that too.

By the time they reached home, one of them lost his eyesight. They fell out and blamed each other for their misdeed. Hot words were exchanged, blows too. After a few days, Bawaji sent a bottle of mustard oil with a message: "Massage, then fight." They were already repenting of their folly and brought back whatever they had stolen. Bawaji readily forgave them. The thief could once again see, his eyesight restored.

Do you mind if I break away from the narration to tell you how I learnt the Gayatri-the mantra I revere the most?

I was about 12 years old-just a student at school. It was a place called Mangla Headworks on the river Jhelum.

One day, late in the evening, we, my friends and I, were playing cricket-not the full team but just five of us. When it was my turn to play, one of the players gave up-he ran away. That was too bad, I thought, and I ran after him. Before I could catch up, he rushed into his house and at once joined his people. They were sitting on the ground and reciting mantras. I was about to collar him when suddenly I felt a sense of awe. I gave up.

After some time, he came out and said: "Friend! I am really sorry. It's already dark, you will be the first to play tomorrow."

"Never mind the play. Just tell me what you and your people were doing?"

"We do the vedic sandhya (the evening prayer) every day. Would you like to join in ?"

"But I have no idea what it is," I said.

"That I will teach you."

He went in and brought one booklet for me. As I was glancing through it in the failing light, my friend remarked : "Better start with the Gayatri. It is a mantra of great consequence."

"I'll do that...."

"Never mind what the words mean, it is the chanting that matters. My father says that the Gayatri helps us transcend what is unmanlike in us and leads us on to the Glorious One."

As he recited the mantra, I liked the tone of it. Before we parted, I told him in sport: "The war of Mahabharata gave the Gita to the world. Our little 'war' today has given me the Gayatri."

"In no way less in grace and sublimity," added my friend helpfully.

A fortnight later.....

A fortnight later-full of verve and happy to have come by a new faith-I found myself at a quiet riverside spot, some distance from the Upper Jhelum Canal Headworks. I wanted to recite the Gayatri as the waves splashed against the meddle- some rock* that juts out into the river. A boat was there. A wire-rope secured it with an iron peg, embedded in the rock. I had not noticed it before.

I got into the boat and soon started reciting the Gayatri. But not for long; for I was soon lost in deep thought, entranced.

Later on I had an uneasy feeling. There was a sound like something cracking. Perhaps the wire-rope had stretched too far. The boat was not steady either. It went up, it went down, and it rocked.

*On the farthest end of this rock, I used to sit and meditate. It was about thirty feet long.

Despite it all...the Gayatri japa continued....It may sound strange but I did see the mantra written in words of light, before my mind's eye.

Though wrapped up in a mellow haze of ecstasy, I was vaguely aware of being in peril of a catastrophe. Perforce I opened my eyes and looked up-an overcast evenfall, the dark clouds, terrific lightning flashes and the deafening thunder-claps-all set to descend into a fearful storm. Time, I should go back home, I told myself. In the gathering darkness I felt all the more uneasy.

I got up to go. I took a step. Another step...I staggered... and I fell.... Suddenly I felt I was going down into the depths of the flooded river.* The very next moment, however, I clambered on to the boat... then all went blank.... When I came to, I found myself sitting comfortably in the boat. The boat? It was hugging the rock.

From the boat I stepped on to the rock easily.

As I stood collecting myself, the lightning flashed and I saw the boat being whirled away by the onrushing waters on to the whirlpool. The wire-rope cracked ominously.

Again a flash of lightning, a clap of thunder and a sudden rush of cold wind! I shivered.

Instinctively I touched my clothes. They were wet....As I turned to go home, once again the lightning flashed and the thunder growled as though to chastise the whirlpool for badly mauling the boat.

Later on-Mataji once told me that Bawaji had saved me from drowning. I had forgotten the incident, but she remembered:

*Several years after this incident, sometime in 1937, I had an occasion to go to Mangla again. I went round all the places where I used to roam about-I also went to that particular spot where a rock reached out into the river, The signboard, warning DANGER, was still there. Even on that day I saw a log of wood caught in the whirlpool. It was fascinating to watch the heavy log plunge and rear in a bid to get away. Across the river the sun was going down. Overwhelmed by the old memories, I took out a coin and threw it into the whirlpool for a keepsake. It could have been my watery grave.

bered: "One day, while sitting by the fireside, I heard Bawaji exclaim: 'Oh, the boy !' I looked up. Suddenly he was not there-but the very next moment I saw him dripping wet all over.

"I thought he was perspiring becacuse of sitting near the crackling fire, but he said: 'Raushan had fallen in the flooded river. He must not go there again.'

It must have been as Mataji related, otherwise how could she have possibly known that incident in my life..... Incidentally I may mention that the very next day Mr. Chambers, an executive officer, stopped me from going to that spot again.

Do you mind if I narrate another incident or two, before I go on?

The day was hot. I was on my way to the Kutia-to meet Bawaji.

I had come to Jammu in the morning and had to catch the evening train to be in time for the University examination the next day.

More than twenty miles to cover that day, and on foot ! "To save time why not take to a path across the fields ?"

Either because of the sweltering heat, or the nightlong train journey from Lahore to Jammu, my head was in a whirl. Suddenly I found myself in a field, hedged in on all sides by garna trees. As the hedge* was close and thick, I could not find my way out.

I felt lost. It wasn't easy to go on. Because I had not eaten anything, I felt faint.

"I must have entered the field through some gap. Why can't I find my way out now?"

Suddenly I saw someone, very tall and elusive, sitting under a mango tree. I became aware of him when he called out: "Hither!"

As I walked up to him, he just smiled and said nothing. I measured him with my glance from head to foot, and there!

*Probably it was to keep off the wild cattle that the field had a thorny hedge around it.

I saw right where he was sitting, sparkling water flowing in a small stream! Bending over, I dipped my hands in it.

The water was icy cold! Something not possible in that part of the countryside.

I drank heartily and felt better. While washing my hands, feet and face, I asked the stranger whether he knew where Bawaji's Kutia was.

That very moment something stirred within me. I looked at the man carefully. Was he Bawaji? How could it be? The man had a long beard, though only on the chin. But his bearing and the facial expression was the same as that of Bawaji.

However, before I could ask another question, the stranger said: "I know your Bawa. The other day he set a poor cobbler's hut on fire. Over there.....
As I looked in the direction pointed by him, I saw a pretty wide gap in the hedge. Beyond that, not very far, was the Kutia, its flag fluttering in the air. Without even once looking back, I was on my way to the Kutia.

Before I could knock, the door of the Kutia opened and I was greeted by someone with a glass of water in hand.

"It's so warm today. How about some water ?"

"Already he had enough of it." That was Bawaji. So he knew what had happened on the way.

I know the road to the Kutia, every inch of it. I remember the point at which I took a short cut. But I have never been able to locate that particular field where I had had the feel of a miracle!

How about another?

One day, after having meditated for several hours in the quiet of a thick jungle flanking the Patni top (Kashmir), I found myself struggling back to consciousness. It was quite some time before I could realize that it was already late in the evening and I had lost all sense of direction. Looking around and up, I saw dark clouds closing in from all sides to make the dusk deeper all the more.

"I must not delay, it is already late," I told myself. "But which way to go?" Of that I was not sure. Still I walked some distance. But I turned back when I saw an unfamiliar wild creeper tangled up with a tree. I turned in another direction. A huge boulder blocked the way. Of a sudden, a dog barked in the distance-sharp and loud. Since a neigh- bour had once warned me that sometimes a wild bear turns up, I was a little scared.

Again a dog barked. I stood to attention.

Suddenly a voice rang out: "I have lost my way." Again somebody called: "Anybody there? Koi Hai* ?"

As if in response to the call, I called back: "Hither!"

I was all ears. Footsteps? The clattering sound of the wooden slippers. Then I saw a man, very tall and elusive, coming on, closely followed by a black dog. Though it was dark, I could now see a rugged path. How odd! It was nowhere there a little while before. Down the mountain path-a strange glow spread over it- the stranger walked ahead of me. The wooden slippers that he was wearing made a terrible clatter..... No words exchan- ged, nor usual greetings-I just followed the man walking ahead of me.

As we neared a wooden bridge, I caught up with him and said: "Sir, there! That is the road to Batote**." Strange indeed! The stranger was already on the highway.....silent and elusive as before.

As we neared a dilapidated house, wherefrom I had to climb a little to reach my place, I soliloquized: "Why not let the stranger stay with me ?..... But I am myself staying with my relatives.....Let it then be the tourist bungalow."

As if in response to what was going on in my mind, the stranger was quick to reply: "Why the tourist bungalow ? There is a temple nearby."

* कोई है ै। **It was at Bawaji's instance that I had gone to Batote to spend some time there. That is a long story. There I met Dr. Mukand Lal Bhatia from Lucknow. It was with his younger son Baljit that I shared my first spiritual experience.

Not long after, we climbed up a little along a stiff incline and arrived at the temple courtyard. I had never noticed that place of worship before. Someone walked out of the strangely clamant shadows. I approached him and said: "Can the man over there stay here for the night ?"

The man just nodded and said nothing.

"Thank you, sir."

I dipped into my pocket, took out a silver coin and said:

"Take it, please. More I'll pay later."

He just nodded as before and said nothing.

"Also build a fire for him, please."

Again he merely nodded and said nothing. Oh, my host would be worrying about me. How can I wait till all the
arrangements for the stranger's stay are through? The little angel* would be waiting for her bed- time story. As I stood undecided, I heard the stranger say: "So long as I get firewood for my Dhuna, everything else is all right. Now go back home, do not delay any more. The child was not yet asleep when I reached my place. Later, while meditating,
I felt inside me a glad stirring.

"It was Bawaji," whispered to me my mind. "How can it be possible?" That was the end of it.

Next morning-I was intensely mindful of the stranger. Oh! He would be waiting.

I reached the temple. Nobody was there. I searched everywhere. The stranger was nowhere. I waited.

After some time, I saw someone coming down a mountain trail. As he came closer, I could recognise the man of the night before. I walked up to him and said: "Sir! Where is the stranger who stayed here for the night? Did you give him whatever he wanted? How much I owe you by now?"

"What are you saying?" He looked surprised.....

Did Bawaji show me the way? That is my feeling any- way. Later, I could have asked him, but he never allowed me to ask questions-not even about sadhana.

*The ailing child of the people with whom I was staying.

Long after sunset, sometime in November 1935, I did once ask Bawaji a question or two about sadhana. We were sitting on the verandah by the fireside. That is how I began: "Bawaji! Everybody tells me that you are a siddha yogi. Why don't you make me a yogi, too?"

"Shall I ? All right!"

Something happened. It happened to me: Though eyes wide open, I could not see anything-not even Bawaji. No Kutia, no walls, no Dhuna-all around just half-lit space and "environment". I closed my eyes, opened them again and exclaimed: "Oh! Where am I? The arms-the legs-the body ?"

Now-I see my face, eyes as well. The forehead, also the ears. Suddenly I feel like rubbing my face. I feel so very uneasy.....and I start rubbing my face and head and all.

Where am I? I feel better because of the vigour of that.

Now I feel as if I am floating in the air. "Bawaji !" A voice seems to call out. Is it my voice? It is.

Now I am in Bawaji's room. I look around. Suddenly I see a snake coiled around my neck. It sways. Another one. Near the hairline I see another snake sticking out. It sways to and fro, sideways too.

"Bawaji! Bawaji! Oh! The snakes !" I giggle out. There is a strange sensation in the region of my heart and the navel. I am trying to hold back the snake-away from the eyes-so that I could have a better view.....

The snakes are ethereal-only the form and no substance in them. To my surprise the hands are also ethereal.

Now I am undulating as if I were the wavy air. Now the ethereal snakes are everywhere-flying all around.

No longer dark-now it is as if I were peering at the morning sky some time before sunrise.

Now I quiver, I tremble. Now I shudder; and I feel very tense-and heavy-hearted.

Now surges within me a blissful feeling and I am athrill.

The thrill is strangely satisfying.....probably I am on the threshold of some revealing spiritual experience.

Now a sudden pull-I get a sudden upward push. And I rise higher and higher.....till I am afloat high up..... And down below I see the earth wrapped up in a mellow haze.

Now I fear lest I should float away. But I do not. Though uncomfortable and uneasy, I swing freely as if on a pivot. I must somehow pull myself together and be, shall I say, free....."

Now I tremor. Oh, the thrill and the vigour of a strange delight-hard to describe..... A sudden jerk! And I find myself in the (Kutia) courtyard-near the Thari..... Now I feel being utterly different, though I am as before....

Suddenly a call that sounds distant: "Raushan! Come here. The fire is dying." It is Bawaji.

Still entranced-I open the front door, go out, gather some firewood, and come back. The Dhuna is however already ablaze.....and Bawaji is sitting.....aglow and all smiles. As I sit down by his side, he remarks: "Whenever in the throes of a spiritual turmoil, never let fear enter your heart. Let not the strangeness of the experience startle you, nor alarm...

"Kundalini-awakening is not difficult but you need spiritual stamina, strength of character and the courage of your convictions to do the sadhana..... Providence initiates, tests, purifies and readies you for the Advent."

Bawaji used to offer, on one occasion or another, food to the people from the nearby villages. (Not essentially only the poor.) The cooked food always sufficed even if more people turned up than invited.

Once I had a personal experience of the miracle: Instead of eleven children that I had invited, about one hundred women and children turned up for the holy feast. Finding me in a fix, Bawaji undertook to distribute the rice pudding him-self. All had their fill! When the feast was over Bawaji said: "Raushan, here is your share."

I looked at the cooking pot. It was still half full. Sant Ram, who used to cook for Bawaji, two friends of his, and I sat down to eat. We finished it all, but still felt hungry.

Bawaji had a set routine. No visitors were allowed on Thurs- days and Saturdays. Every Tuesday, he invited children and gave them rice pudding to eat. Saturday, he used to give rice to a needy person. On Sunday, he offered religiously a large sweet bread (रोट) at the altar, the Thari. (Thari is a mystic symbol, as already stated.) Every third year, he gave away a young cow with its first-born calf to a learned brahmin.

Bawaji never stayed for long at one place. People used to build another Kutia for him wherever he chose. The Kutia always had the same design: two rooms, a verandah and an open courtyard, with a well nearby.

I have already introduced you to Mataji as the young lady who had accompanied her husband to Kalali Ka Tibba. Now something about my relationship with Bawaji.

Once a casual remark by Bawaji that he too had someone of his own, evoked a query from Mataji: "Bawaji, where is he ?"

"He is not here. All the same, close your eyes and see."

She closed her eyes and saw a young man wearing a dhoti, a white shirt and a woollen coat. He was carrying on his shoulder a small packet tied to a bamboo stick.

"He is carrying his lunch with him. Whenever he comes, he will not bother you," added Bawaji.

"I would love to meet him," said Mataji.

"He is not yet born. You will meet him when he is twenty or so.

When Mataji saw me for the first time, in December 1930, I was that age.

How do I know? It was Mataji who told me all about it. I myself was amazed when she narrated one incident or another of my early life. It was not a case of clairvoyance, Bawaji had told her all about it.

As late as 1950, she once told me: "The day you were born, Bawaji performed a Yajna and offered food to the poor. After 21 days, he gave you the name you bear. You grew up and he began to call my younger son (Haveli Ram) Beli- because he wanted him to be your beli*.

*The word beli means a friend.

"You started going to school. Small things of your school- life were dear to him and he used to narrate them with pride. Once he saved you from drowning in the river Jhelum. He was always concerned about your well-being.

"You went to Lahore for higher studies. Later, one day, Bawaji said: 'It's time Raushan came over... Two years at college are enough."

"Later on-one day, he said: 'I wish Beli were to bring Raushan here.' I hastened to say that given the address Beli would go to the other end of the earth.

"Bawaji smiled. I felt intrigued. In fact you were in town and Beli had already met you.

"You came to the Kutia. But you were not the way I had seen you in the vision. When told, Bawaji readily agreed to let me have another look at you. Next day I could recognize you as you walked past me-wearing a dhoti, white shirt and a

woollen coat. Sure enough you were also carrying on your shoulder a small packet tied to the bamboo stick."

That Bawaji is no more, I cannot possibly accept. I believe that one day we will meet again. On the 30th December 1935, at six in the morning, he gave me the slip. He is one of the Masters, the siddha purushas, who come and go as and when they will.

From the day I first met him in December 1930, till August 1935-whenever I think of those days, I am reminded of a poet's lines:

"I fled Him, down the night and down the days.

I fled Him, down the arches of the years.

I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways

Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears

I hid from Him, and under running laughter Up vistaed hopes I sped;

And shot, precipitated,

Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,

From those strong Feet that followed, followed after."

I also fled Bawaji, but could not. Whenever Bawaji called, I had to go to him. Whatever the circumstances, I could not stay back. Those were agonising days, the fateful ones.

In those days, nowhere did I feel safe or at ease. A glad- some smile of a friend would suddenly change to a simmering frown. A welcome call by a relation would later turn to a contemptuous brush-off. And I would often find myself on the road, lonesome, hungry and sad.

Once it was at a friend's house in downtown (Lahore) that I sat down to a welcome meal after a long week of starvation. I had not as yet started eating when someone made a taunting remark. Cut to the quick I went out...

Now that I am out in the cold December night, please come out to share with me a strange experience.

Tears racing down my face, I am walking at a quick pace. Where is the hurry? Why not slow down...

Despite the cold, I feel warm. How about taking off my woollen coat? The cap, too. I do. Let me do a quick mile or two to reach a long way off "home". The place where I stay.

I reach the main street. Hardly conscious of a drizzle, I plod on. The Shahalami Gate cannot be far out. Now my house too should not be more than half an hour's walk.

Hark! It sounds like footsteps. Anybody there?

A sudden spurt of rain and I quicken my pace. Must I go home? Why not spend the night out? To be out on the road has its own charm-nobody is bothered whether or not you have money in your pocket. your pocket. A pickpocket may be disap- pointed, but he will tell no one.

How about going to Dwarka Singh's* house? At this late hour? He might like to come out with me. Hadn't he, his friends and myself been out asinging hymns the other night?

No?

No.

What to do then?...

Looking up into an awfully darkened sky, I stood... No idea how long and how... Suddenly I was startled by a voice:

*He was a great friend and a noble soul. Anybody who loved God was always welcome. I revere his sacred memory. ...

"Who are you? A mad man, a mystic or some fakir?" I saw a stranger standing right in front of me. Before I could say anything, he
kept on: "Look! I am wearing a woollen shirt, a woollen jacket, a woollen coat and here is this pashmina shawl. You are young. But I am not very old either."

Suddenly he snatched the cap from my hand, waved it in my face, and kept up: "Here is a bag of bones feeling like fanning himself. He feels hot while others freeze." I shook myself into awareness.

I looked all around. No stir. No passers-by. All quiet. No flicker of light. Only a dark cloudy night. Even the windows looking out on the street were dark and ominous.

The stranger was right. I was a bag of bones. Though it was very cold. I was wearing no woollens. Even the coat that I had was hanging on my shoulders. And no doubt about it that I was fanning myself with my cap. But I was not mad. Nor a mystic. A fakir? Not a beggar at least.

I measured the stranger with my gaze. He was tall, dark and elusive. Suddenly his voice broke in upon my thoughts: "Come on, let us go. I am also going that side." Which side?

In utter silence, we passed through Shahalami Gate and crossed the Circular Road. Suddenly the stranger quickened his pace and proceeded towards the Mela Ram tank. For a while, he was lost in the rustling shadows of the ancient Pipal tree, but soon after he came into view standing near a milk vendor's shop. I could see flames rising from the burning stove.

For a while I stood undecided, then I also followed him. As I reached, the vendor took a glassful of steaming hot milk and handed it over to the stranger. He passed it on to me and said: "Take it.

Though surprised by the abrupt offer, I said casually : "I am not feeling hungry."

The stranger threw the milk into the dustbin. No words. The vendor handed him another glass of milk. Again the stranger held it out to me and said: "Lest it should go waste, better have it."

Before he could go on, the vendor out in : "Throw it in the drain, if you will. I have another panful of milk, ready to be served."

As I stood hesitating, the vendor began raking the fire. The desolation around lit up as the flames rose higher. Suddenly the thunder growled and the lightning flashed in its light strangely glistened the stranger's eyes. Was he in tears? (Oh! Let me live that night all over again.) A sudden rush of hot air, and I felt warm and dry all over from head to foot.

I looked up. Smiling affably and holding out to me the glass of milk the stranger stood-waiting. I had no choice. Overwhelmed by the kindly warmth I took the milk. It tasted good.

Without saying a word of thanks or greetings, I just walked away. However, the stranger was with me in a trice. As we walked on, the face of the vendor flashed, like a gladsome smile before my mind's eye. Who was he? Why not have another look at him? I looked back...

No leaping flames that I could see. The shop was in sight- but it was closed. As the lightning flashed, I could see the leaves of the ancient Pipal tree glisten in its light.

Just then my companion broke in upon my thoughts and said: "Here is a short cut to your place." All quiet again.

"Do you also live somewhere here ?" I asked the stranger.

That was just to ruffle the awesome hush around.

Not long after, I took a sharp turn and entered a dimlylit street. After walking some distance, I looked back to see if the kindly stranger was still following me. He was not. But the next moment I saw him standing a little ahead of me- leaning
against a lamp post.
"Do you live here ?" I asked. In reply to my query the stranger said: "No, I was only waiting for you."
I looked up as he added: "Come on, dear brother. Tell me how much money you need ?"
I had a good look at the stranger as he held out a handful of coins and some currency notes.
The coins jingled as he brought them closer to me.

I hesitated. I wondered.

"Pray, do not hesitate. Money is something that just passes through our hands; it belongs to God alone and no one else. Whosoever happens to possess it, at any one time, has a sacred responsibility of making a right use of it."

"You are right, sir, but that gives me no right to rob you of what you possess by exciting sympathy...."

The stranger cut me short and said: "If you are going to accept what I am offering with a sense of responsibility, then it is all right. You commit no wrong, nor any sin."

"I do not understand..." "Anybody accepting help without a genuine sense of responsibility is a sinner
and whosoever helps senselessly is a sinner too. Always bear that in mind, pray. Law of Karma is inexorable...." "But..." "Come on, have no idle compunctions. Take what I give and pledge yourself to
help someone else in the hour of his need, not necessarily me."

As I stood still hesitating the stranger said: "You can't always do a good turn to others. Sometimes, it is the other way round too. Don't feel hurt. Life is like that. Now how about…

" I cut him short and said: "I accept. But I must return what- ever I take."

The stranger gave me a silver rupee coin-just the amount that I needed to save myself from an awkward situation.

As I stood still hesitating, he gave me his address.

Before we parted, I heard a distant voice say time and time again: "Friends and foes are roaming about in the garb of strangers."

Next came a short spell of welcome smiles and favours. A friend of mine took me to Lyallpur where his parents lived. I did not like to go, but he insisted. Everybody there was kind and affectionate. I did sadhana there and had some wonderful spiritual experiences. I shall say something about one of them later*. At last, I took leave of them and reached the

*Death Experienced (Hinduism and Its Dynamism).

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railway station to catch the train for Lahore. The train was already moving, when my friend ran up to me and thrust in my
hand some money. (He was not at home when I had left.)

I reached Lahore. From the railway station I went straight to meet the kindly stranger. A passer-by directed me to a flour mill. I opened the door of the office and walked in, as if I stood on no formality with the owner.

As I entered, I saw the stranger looking into the accounts. He looked up, frowned a little, and said: "What do you want?"

The tone was a little unfamiliar and harsh.

Placing the silver coin on the table, I said: "I owe it to you, sir.'

Without looking at me, he called out :"Koi hai?? This man seems to have lost his way."

An office clerk came in.

"Why do you allow people in, just like that?"

The poor clerk looked at me while I looked at the mill-owner to seek a look of recognition. There was none that I could see. Touching my arm, the burly clerk picked up my silver coin and said: "Here, take your money. Go to some grocer's shop." Many a thing happens in life which helps you to find your faith.

Look! There stands a young man with an empty bag and many a day's starvation gnawing at his pride. He is looking wistfully at a house which had for long been his home. Its door has been banged in his face, and he is now out on the road alone, sad and sore.

Time and time again he touches his pocket. Some coins are in it. The day before he had borrowed the small amount from a friend-a few rupees and some odd annas. The friend owes him some money but had conveniently forgotten about it.

Uncertain, undecided, he stands. Listlessly he takes the coins out of his breast pocket and starts counting them. Maybe, he likes to hear themjingle.... Maybe, Providence wants to make him familiar with the disquieting feel of poverty.

It was some time in August 1935, and it was none else but I who was finding it difficult to decide whether he should buy himself a meal or go to the railway station.

Just then an old classmate came and rapped out: "Thank God we are seeing the last of you. Look at your tattered clothes, haggard face, and forlorn bearing. What a shame! You are a disgrace to us all. Look! There !" And he pointed at a gaily dressed friend of ours chatting with a bright-eyed girl.

Stung to the quick, I hurried away thinking of a poet's lines;

"But with hurrying chase,

And unperturbed pace,

Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,

They beat-and a Voice beat

More instant than the Feet-

'All things betray thee, who

....betrayest Me.

Naught shelters thee, who will not shelter Me!'"

"Before someone else comes and says nastier words, let me get away," I told myself. Just as I turned, I saw a group of students coming from the opposite direction. They were boisterous, rowdy and gay. I could have been one of them. We had been at college together.

I looked at my shabby clothes. With the left hand, I felt my unshaven face.

Letting the battered bag fall on the pavement, I stood aside as if it did not belong to me.

My garrulous friends suddenly stopped and began to jeer at a poor passer-by. I felt uneasy and turned back.

As I turned, a tonga came to a sudden stop and the man driving it said: "Come! I'll take you to the railway station."

The moment I climbed on to the back seat, the tongawala lashed the horse. ...

I was on my way to Bawaji. ... Even on the way, I tried to catch at the proverbial drowning man's straw, but I got it in the neck. Again it was a friend who struck me full in the face. His unkind words...and unfriendly behaviour, oh...So often that is the way of the world.

Allow me the luxury of a lull. Even a storm permits that. As I write, rambling thoughts are crowding in upon my mind.

Nothing hits harder than the unkind words of a friend. You stagger under the blow and human dignity shrieks out in a wild protest. There is a hue and cry and the man within you frowns upon this human failing. This is the beginning of a catastrophe- minor or major-in the life of an individual or of the family of man. The ills of the world have always been due to man's failure as a human being-whether it is a law of nature or not- it is so.

Friend? Drop "r"-the right conduct-and a friend becomes a fiend. ... That is true not only in an individual's life, but also on the universal plane.

Friendship? It rises sublimely from what is best in man and lends grace and warmth to his life. It helps him to see what it is to be truly human.

After having been struck full in the face by many a hand that he holds in trust and friendship, man, the eternal seeker, finds himself in quest of God, a Friend in truth!

Finding myself without a friend in the whole world, I turned to Bawaji, my guru-a friend, philosopher and guide rolled into one. He turned out to be a noble soul and a siddha purusha. His guidance helped me step outside myself to find my true identity. Even now whenever I find myself in utter distress, I usually turn to Bawaji alone for help and guidance. I don't know whether it is right or wrong, but it is so.

Don't take whatever I say to be a gospel truth-Providence might choose the other way in your case.

Now--in those days, had my circumstances, relations and friends been not what they were, I would have remained for ever a stranger in a stranger's house. They did me a good turn by not allowing me shelter and helped me truly by pushing me thus on to the ultimate Haven.

One dark stormy night*, I remember: With a storm raging within, I sat forlorn, hungry and friendless on the terrace of a friend's house. Out in the streets of Gujranwala town, I heard people herald the midnight hour when Lord Krishna was born.

*It happened to be Janam Ashtami, Lord Krishna's Birthday.

It is strange but true that darkness ushers in the light of day whether in the universe or in the life of man.

Whatever I might now say the fact remains: For years I was on the run-fleeing from the unkind words, pitying glances, angry scowls, disparaging remarks and nasty behaviour of friends and foes. A thwarted hope or an unfulfilled desire did give me pain. I was terribly afraid of getting hurt. By hurting me time and time again nature taught me that it is safer to face a situation than to run away from it. So many times my fears turned out to be baseless.

At long last, I went to Bawaji because I had nowhere else to go. For long, I had been going without a sympathetic look, a gladsome hope, a hearty welcome, or a come-hither smile.

One after another, all the doors had been banged in my face. The circumstances, possibly Providence too, had hounded me out of wherever I sought shelter. All had joined hands and conspired to throw me bodily against a door-the DOOR of my Master.

So now here I am, sometime in August 1935, looking wistfully at THE DOOR of my MASTER. Though down and out, torn and exhausted, I dare not knock for succour.

Not the slightest sign of anybody moving behind the shutters -it is all quiet. Presently I hear, as if footsteps. Has anybody at long last come to claim me as his very own? I roll up my badly frayed sleeves. Because of vanity*, still left in me, I could not bear to be seen tattered. That a starved man looks less than human, I am painfully aware of. Straightening up my drooping shoulders, I try to buoy up my languishing spirits. And, in order to look human enough, I hurriedly scramble for and

*Vanity? What is wrong with it? Vanity in the sense of human dignity and self-respect sh
welcome. To my mind it has done more good to the world than the so-called humility.

Usually humility is a cultured virtue. It is like a cultured pearl- produced under artificial co

Be humble-but do not culture humbleness. Be vain-but do not culture vanity. Whateve
naturally at any one time should be preferred.

scramble up whatever manly grace is still left in me. I even coax myself into a feeble smile-ready to make a proud display of myself.

Suddenly old memories, aspirations, predilections even, crowd in upon my thoughts. Even the sense of responsibility, justice and fair play calls out to me dolefully: "Whither?" As if that was not enough, a long forgotten love cries out in desperation: "Come back to me, my love."

"The die is cast." My lips did part to utter these words but the voice was voiceless. With effort I opened my eyes and looked around.

Alas, it was no human being who had come to claim me-it was a potter's pony-Harassed by a crow because of an ugly wound on its back, it had come to where I was standing. Fate playing pranks on me!

The pony nibbling at the grass fascinated me. Suddenly pangs of hunger re-appeared. Picking up a wee little stem of grass, I began to chew it. Had the life in me started tingling again? I wondered.

Suddenly I heard Bawaji say: "Raushan! Chase the pony away. It comes every day."

I drove it away.

"Is the pony gone?"

Before I could reply, Bawaji opened the door and said: "What are you doing here?"

"I have come..."

"Why?"

"Because I have nowhere else to go."

"Will you stay?"

I kept quiet.

"Will you stay ?"

Again I kept quiet.

"Come in.

Suddenly I burst into tears, when he said: "Promise, you will "give" me samadhi* with your own hands."

*At that time I had no idea about samadhi. To me the word samadhi meant going into a spiritual trance. I thought Bawaji wanted me to teach him Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. Alas! He meant something else.

"Make no fun of me, Bawaji. I will go back," I sobbed out. "Come in. It is a deal," said Bawaji and smiled. Next day I got up early. Everything looked so odd, so strange. I could have never
even imagined that I would ever stay with a sadhu in his Kutia. I had my ideas, ideals and ambitions. Given the choice, I would have never gone over to another, other than the usual, way of life. But I had to. Like a pro- claimed offender, I was out on the road running, running. Up against me was the whole world of friends and foes, relations and the indifferent strangers. I stood beaten. The other day, Professor Mukand Lal Bhatia* was telling me: "We used to feel sorry for you. We had been given to understand by your relations that you were of unsound mind. We could do nothing.

"You often spent the whole night on the terrace of your house, doing God knows what. During the day you were climbing the hills around. One day Baljit, my younger son, saw you doing some sort of yoga sadhana. Balraj, my other son, told the same story.

"Alas! Baljit is no more. He died in an accident at Glas- gow (Scotland) in 1960. He could have told you about the spiritual experience he had shared with you. I don't know much about yoga, but I know he could never forget the incident. That was probably some time in 1932. And it was at Batote (Kashmir) where you were staying with your relatives."

Now-I had dreamed of a good education. Whether it would have been possible or not, for further studies I had even planned to go to some foreign university. I would like to be either a professor or a doctor-I used to tell my friends. Though I practised yoga, I had never thought it would mean an altogether different way of life. No ebbing away of zest for life while doing sadhana! Nor had I been a lotus eater in the making. All those years, I kept myself abreast of the times and never lost sight of the everyday goings-on. To what extent I got involved in them--I cannot say however.

*As stated earlier, I met him at Batote (Kashmir) where I had gone to stay for some time at Bawaji's instance.

Whatever I did, I did with a purpose and a sense of destiny. Joining a procession of freedom-fighters and helping the national cause were of as much importance to me as an hour of quiet meditation at some lonely spot. Wiping the tears of a child in distress was as dear to me as washing the floors of the temples.

Not infallible, however. I erred then as I err now.

I observed life from close quarters and learnt a lot from it. It is not given to all to serve or be able to sacrifice. It is not within everybody's province to become good or be bad. Nor can everybody be a leader of men as and when he or she chooses. It is in the scheme of things that all will play their part and be useful or not as the Lord proposes or purposes. It is His world and not yours or mine. How He runs it-that is His concern.

Then, I don't think anybody can turn to God purely on his own initiative. And talk of surrender unto His will is a tall talk. No one surrenders even a wee bit of his will: God wills it.

Sorry to interrupt you and break in upon your thoughts.

Now I will let Usha, Professor Mukand Lal Bhatia's daughter, narrate the spiritual experience that Baljit, her younger brother, shared with me:

Of the four of us-myself, Balraj, Baljit and Bimla-Baljit was different. He was hardly eight, but, even at that age, he was in love with the Lord and in quest of the Inconceivable.

On the way home, after a long walk, one day he asked Nathji: "Brother, what do you do at night on the terrace of your house?"

"I try to converse with God," he was told light-hear- tedly.

That was enough to excite Baljit and he said: "I also want to talk to Him."

Despite Nathji's trying to divert his attention, he insisted: "You must show me God. Brother, you must."

By this time they had reached Nathji's house. Baljit caught hold of his arm and said: "I will not let you go." A child's mind was made up and he could not be put off.

Nathji looked at my brother, pointed towards a rock standing ahead of them, and said: "Behold! There!"

Suddenly Baljit cried out and turned pale. Next moment, he jumped in the air and clung to Nathji, sobbing loudly.

Spontaneities of spiritual experiences help the aspirants to make their mark.

Slowly my brother came to, but he continued to sob. Nathji looked perturbed. He took my brothers to his house, and made them sit on the chairs. By putting a white sheet of cloth on a cot standing on its side, he made it into a cinema screen.

"Now come on, dear Baljit, I will show you something more," said he.

Both Baljit and Balraj saw on the improvised screen a black and white movie picture, clear in details - except that it lacked the high contrast characteristic of the pictures projected from a magic lantern. Most of the scenes centered round a palace with an ancient architectural pattern. There were kings and queens, princes and princesses, courtiers and soldiers. It was Krishna Leela. That is how they felt.

"Now children, go home and have your meal. Baljit, be a good boy and never forget where you turly belong," said Nathji.

My brothers came back home relaxed and full of joy, and related the whole incident to me. Baljit was not himself for quite some days. Later also, he gave an impression of being lost in thought of Him. What did Baljit see? This is what he told me after a lot of persuasion:

"I saw a very large eye that shone brightly. In it I saw a smiling figure in the act of stepping out. As the figure stepped out and started coming towards me, I got frightened and screamed."

Not long after, Nathji left for Lahore and we lost track of him. It was in 1967 that we met again. He was very sorry to hear about Baljit's sad death.

Just two quotations from the diary that my brother kept will show how his mind worked: "O God! Today again I have seen that Light."
"Lord! I have again meditated and known the peace and quietude.''

Balraj, my elder brother, is a physician and a scientist. He is greatly interested in physiological psychology. He is keen to find out and give a scientific explanation of the phenomenon of the vision he saw in 1932 at Batote. Even today he has a vivid recollection of what he had seen for about 15 minutes.

Nathji believes that the so-called supernatural phenomena are governed by certain laws of nature which man has yet to discover. Balraj feels that, while interpreting the scientific discoveries of the past and future, it is desirable for the scientist to remember the existence of a very vital, though highly elusive, dimension of REALITY hitherto unknown to science. He also feels that truth will be revealed to the scientists when their methodology and procedures for the study of parapsychology are not so primitive and crude as they are today.

Time rolled on, interspersed by days and nights. August, September, October, November-at last it was December's end. All those months, a dug-out pit* was there, at one end of the Kutia compound. For some time I was conscious of it because of the inconvenience it caused, but I got used to it by and by.

During this period many things happened. For me it was then a novel experience. But now I know many of them were miraculous happenings. To cook, to carry water from a far- off well, or to see ethereal snakes flying all around me-it was all part of the life I found myself living...To me, it was the start of a new life altogether...

Though I stayed with Bawaji, I did not know what he meant to me. The unconscious might have been but I wasn't

*The pit had been dug the day I was allowed to enter. As I stood awkwardly in the Kutia compound, somebody knocked. I opened the door and asked him what he wanted. He told me that in the morning he had dug a pit inside the Kutia and Bawaji had asked him to come later for the payment.

aware of the role that he played in my life. I had gone to him-because nobody helped me then and I had nowhere to go.

While staying in the Kutia, I had nothing much to do. Bawaji did things with his own hands. Sant Ram did the cooking and other odd jobs. Only when he was sent away by Bawaji, sometime in November, that I took it all upon myself. Bawaji taught me to cook. The rest was easy, not much trouble. But every day I used to do a quick mile and a half to carry water from a well. Since a canal

flowed
nearby, there was no difficulty about water for general use.
This particular Kutia had been built for Bawaji by Pir Sandhya Nath of Pir Khoh (Jammu). Though, at that time, it was quite some distance, now it is a part of Jammu City.

Besides the daily chores I tended the fire, keeping it burning all the time. Since Bawaji used to call the fire (in the fireplace) as Dhuna, I began to do the same.

Till then Bawaji's Dhuna had no meaning for me-the fire in it was kept burning for convenience. I had no woollen clothing, it helped me to keep myself warm. However, for Bawaji it had a special significance. Mornings and evenings he worshiped it. (Whenever I stay in the Kutia I do the same.)
On the 28th of December 1935, I woke up rather early. As it was very cold I went up to the Dhuna to warm myself. No fire in it. When I told Bawaji about it, he sat up on his bed with a strange glow over his face.

A little later, he came out, put some firewood in the fire- place, and said: "Fire is for ever. Fire never dies." His voice sounded distant.

For some moments I was not aware of anything. When I came to, I saw Bawaji's Dhuna fully aflame! Suddenly I felt warm all over. As I moved away from the fireside, he said: "Now give some sweets to the Dhuna with your own hands."

I went in and brought out something sweet and offered it to the Dhuna as directed by Bawaji.

"Raushan! It is not a mere fire, it is NATHJI'S* Dhuna.

*Bawaji used to address God as Nathji. He would never say: "God will help." He always said: "Nathji will help." In the first few

It lives as you or I live. Behold!" Then I saw ! I saw a human figure of flaming fire

rising from the fireplace and
stepping out...

On the 29th December 1935, I woke up as if from a deep trance. The sun had already risen and I was late for the odd jobs. Just when I picked up the bucket, Bawaji said: "No need to carry water. Today run on to Hakim Kanwal Nain and tell him that he must see me today. No fool's errand, rest assured."

I pricked up my ears. The words had a familiar note.

"I think..."

"No wishful thinking either," he cut me short and said.

The words this time struck the right chord, and before my mind's eye flashed the face of Mr. Verma who had, instead of giving me a job, sent me on in quest of where I "truly belonged."

After a while I said in a small voice: "Where does Kanwal Nain live ?"

"Once you are out of the Kutia, walk up to the canal. Near the bridge you will see a man and a woman sitting on its bank. You will be still some distance, when they will get up and start walking towards Akhnoor. Follow them and you will reach a mountain stream across which lies the path to their destination. Let them go their way.

"Here take your time, rest a while till you spot a shepherd boy and his flock of goats and sheep.

"Now leave the canal bank and follow him till you see four men chopping down a berry tree on a farm. Walk up to them and ask the name of the village they come from.

"Now that is the name of the place I want you to go to. They will show you the way.

"By following their instructions, you will find yourself on the outskirts of the village where my friend Kanwal Nain lives.

months of 1936, I also used to do the same. The mutual exchange of greetings between two Nath sadhus is: "Nathji adesh !"
If you walk fast and do not dilly dally on the way, you will catch up with a buffalo which belongs to him.

"Follow the buffalo and you will reach my friend's house."

I wanted to make a move but Bawaji said: "Listen. The moment you enter the house, you will see my friend coming out of his room, holding the hand of his great-grandson. Give my love to the child and ask Kanwal Nain to come and see me."

With the directions safely tucked away in my brain, I came out of the Kutia. To be sure-a man and a woman were going along the canal, a shepherd boy was tending his flock, four men were chopping down the berry tree, and a buffalo was going ahead of me on its way to where Kanwal Nain lived. I delivered Bawaji's message to him and gave love to his great- grandson as per instructions of Bawaji.
Neither he asked me, nor I offered to tell him where Bawaji lived. I was in a hurry to be back for the midday meal.
The surprise! The door of the Kutia stood open and standing in the doorway I could see Bawaji and Kanwal Nain seated by the fireside and talking. Before I could greet him or say anything, Bawaji called: "Raushan! I am unwell. Get me the medicine that my friend here prescribes."
I stood stunned where I was. Kanwal Nain came up to me and scribbled the names of a few medicines.
"But why? He is not unwell," I said.

"It's the end. Tomorrow he will shed his mortal coil," he whispered.

"How do you know?"

"We were to meet a day before-that was the word given to me long long ago. I was then hardly seven or so." Before I could say anything, he went away...never to meet me again.

Instead of saying anything to Bawaji, I went straight to my room and dipped into my pockets. No money.
As I stood wondering, Bawaji called out from his room:

"You will be needing some money. Yesterday somebody gave me some rupee coins. They are out there in the Dhuna."

Entranced as it were, I found myself casually raking the fireplace. Sure enough, I spotted one silver coin, then another, and came upon the third one.
"Will that do ?"

It was Bawaji.

With three coins already in my pocket, I thought aloud :

"One more, please."...

I got up to go, but...

Time came to a sudden stop. No more jingling by it, awfully quiet! Even my breathing came to a pause. I closed my eyes, but opened them again when I felt being swept away to an uneasy state of being.

Flying all around me, I saw tiny little sparks. They disappeared as fast as they glimmered into view. This went on for quite some time till an unearthly silence cast its spell over me- and I was lost...

When I came to... From underneath the red hot embers the shine of the fourth coin virtually called forth. I picked it up with the pair of tongs and put it straight into my pocket- neither burning my fingers nor the pocket! Miraculous indeed.

Under a very strange spell, I wended my way to the town. There I bought the medicine and hurried back home, Bawaji's Kutia. Standing in the doorway, I saw Bawaji sitting by the fireside.

Not long after, overawed by an unearthly silence, I went out in the open fields- to find my own voice as it were. Out there, while gathering firewood, I called : "Leave me not alone. O, Ye Unknown." Time and time again something or another escaped my lips...

At long last I came back and sat down by the fireside wrapped up in a spell of old memories:
I thought of friends, relations, brothers, sisters and parents:

"They had seen the last of you the day you left Lahore. Did anybody write? All these months did anyone care to enquire? Probably for some it was a good riddance. Maybe, some of them have already given you up for lost-even dead*.

*Later, one of my friends did show me a letter he had received from another friend of ours about my "sad and untimely death."
"Now what do you want? Should they come one and all to offer you food and shelter?

"Friends do like to share, but seldom for long. They do not mind helping a friend in need but never a beggar sort. You did a good turn to so many? Nonsense. Didn't many more help you too?

"How about that Swamiji?

"Yes, you did leave your home and all and slaved for him for almost a year. But why didn't you throw it in his face when you found yourself disillusioned in the first few weeks?

"You did not want to hurt his feelings?

"Ah, couldn't it be that you didn't have the courage to call a spade a spade? Nature served you right when Swamiji left you on the railway platform knowing fully well that you had not enough money to buy even one meal.

"Didn't one of his disciples, for whom neither you nor others had a good word, behave as a better human being? Though drunk, he got down from the running train and gave you some money for Swamiji's servant till he could find another job. He might have lost his limb, even life, hadn't another passenger helped him to get into his compartment.

"Dear sir, nobility of character is not the monopoly of the chosen few. So often we find the derelect and the delinquent rising to the occasion and doing something really noble and great.

"Forget it. It's mean on your part ... Don't be uncharitable. Haven't you yourself failed as a son, as a brother, even as a friend? Right now your mother might be crying her heart out.

"Now cheer up. Predictions do not always come true. Then if it were so Bawaji himself could have told you."
With folded hands, in all solemnity I walked up to the Thari, the altar. No words of prayer, just kept standing. None occurred to me at that moment...
I looked up into the sky at the twinkling stars. The eyes closed by themselves. An urge forced me to go down on my knees and utter a prayer: "I am the

Almighty, the All-knowing the All-powerful Brahma." Nothing happened....Prayerfully I recited the Gayatri-again nothing happened. No heavenly angel appeared on the scene or before my mind's eye.... Slowly I walked back to the fireside. ...

There was a strange unquiet quiet all around. My mind would rather not think at ali than think of Bawaji being no more.

In a daze, I went about doing things. I heard strange hum- mings-also shrill, piercing voices. All was not well with me. I felt tense, uneasy and lonesome.

The meal was ready*. Though Bawaji used to have only one meal a day, that day, he also sat down to eat. Later, he passed on his plate to me, without saying a word. Something that he had never done before. He himself used to wash them.

After a while-I reminded him of the medicine and he took it. This was probably the first medicine that he had ever taken. No one had ever known him to be unwell.

The day tore itself away and the dreary evening shadows lost themselves in the gathering dusk. As I sat feeding the Dhuna fire, the flames rose higher to brave the gathering gloom in and around. But alas, the whole place looked the gloomier for it. An unearthly sadness was in the air. I felt awfully sad. Because of the oncoming calamity? Maybe. Hadn't Kanwal Nain told me that it was the end?

As I sat benumbed, tears rolled down my cheeks. I did not feel like moving away from the crackling fire. How did the dead feel on the burning pyre? I wanted to have the feel of it.

On that fateful night, Bawaji slept on the ground and not on the raised platform**. He was lying near the doorway when I went in to ask if he would take another dose of medicine.

*I may mention here: The earthen pot in which I prepared the potato curry had a hole at the bottom. I knew it, but in a state of forgetful- ness I had used that one only. Not till we had finished our meal, I noticed it.

**In the Kutia there was no bed, no table and no chair-not even a stool.

Probably he needed more air. Possibly he wanted to take in the sacred warmth of the Dhuna.

With a force not my own I uttered the words: "I must not allow the fire to die away." And I did keep it burning as if life depended on it.

Weighed down by the thought of the impending tragedy and impelled by a forlorn hope of being spared the agony, I went out to the fields to bring in another log of wood. Lying stuck to the mud, it was too heavy for me to carry.

However, before I knew it, I carried the same log of wood on my shoulder, brought it inside the Kutia and placed it on the dying fire.

Usually a log of wood used to last much longer-but not that night. I wondered.

It had never happened before.

Suddenly I felt as if somebody was walking on tiptoe. Then there was a knock at the door-cautious but demanding. Oh, Bawaji should not be disturbed. I got up to make sure-but again it was as quiet as before.

Footsteps again-as if someone had moved away.

I went out into the courtyard and opened the front door. It was Beli and no unearthly stranger. Five years ago he had taken me and my friend Nihal to Bawaji. Possibly to the very day. For it was then, as now, December's end and the Christmas holidays.

"You? At this late hour?"

"Yes. I was returning home in a tonga when the horse got out of control. Finding the coachman helpless, I asked him to let it go. And here I am. So you see that I am here not of my own free will. Where is Bawaji?"

"He is in his room. Shall I inform him?"

"Do not disturb him. I am not going anywhere. I will stay on for the night."

"Bawaji may not like it."

"I wouldn't have been here then. I know better."

Beli came in and sat down by the fireside. Seeing water boiling in a kettle, he asked: "Tea?"

"No, it is medicine."

"Are you ill?"

"No, Bawaji is unwell."

"Impossible. "Kanwal Nain told me that. "Hakim Kanwal Nain? How did he happen to come over?" "Bawaji sent for him. I delivered the message." Suddenly, Beli looked grave and he said in a small voice: "Then it is the end.' "What do you mean? Kanwal Nain said the same thing. Will Bawaji die tonight?" "A yogi never dies, he merely shuffles off the mortal coil," said Beli. Suddenly the flames rose higher. The leaping flames lit up everything around.
"What is that?" he asked.
Instinctively I looked towards the earth piled up around the pit in the courtyard-and said: "Some time back Bawaji got it dug out.
"It is the samadhi," said Beli.

He turned his face away-to hide his tears probably.

My thoughts flew back to the day when I was allowed to stay in the Kutia. So the word samadhi meant an end to earthly existence. The discarded body will not be cremated. I will have to bury it with my own hands it was the deal. Yes, it was a deal and I was a party to it.
Now it was my turn to turn my face away to hide my tears.

Suddenly a voice broke in upon my thoughts and in response to it, as it were, I said: "Beli, how about dinner?"

"I won't have it."

"How is everybody at home? Whenever I went to see Bawaji at Shahzadpur, Mataji* was aways kind and helpful."
*Till then I had no idea about Mataji's spiritual powers. To me, she was just the mother of Haveli Ram, a casual acquaintance of mine. It was only after the 30th December, 1935 that I came to know about her long association with Bawaji, right from the day when she and her husband had gone to Kalali Ka Tibba to see him.

The Kutia, where I had met Bawaji for the first time in 1930, had been built for him by her husband.
Later on, another Kutia was

Just then Bawaji called:"Raushan!"

I went in. Bawaji gave me instructions about the last rites. Beli was also sitting nearby.

Bawaji could not have possibly known that Beli was there, but he knew. For, at one time, he said: "Who else is there in the room with a pink turban?"*

"Nobody. I wear no turban." I told a lie. However, to my mind, it was not a lie. I knew that Bawaji knew about Beli's presence in the Kutia. Beli was wearing a pink turban.

I kept awake while Beli slept out on the verandah near the Dhuna. Suddenly he woke up and said: "Let me go to make the necessary arrangements."

"Why so soon? It isn't yet daylight. Don't go

Before I could complete the sentence, I had to rush in because Bawaji called: "Come, Raushan! Come! Can't you be by my side even at this hour?"

In the flickering light of the hurricane lantern (that I had kept burning the whole night), I saw Bawaji sitting up on his bed.

"Bawaji, here I am," I said.

Alarmed by a strange urgency in his voice, I said: "Shall I give you another dose?"

No reply.

While sitting down cross-legged by his side, I allowed him to lean back against me. I moved back a little and placed his head on his wooden pillow. But a little later ... I found the head resting in my lap He looked calm. So serene. So restful! The medicine prescribed by Kanwal Nain had done him good. So I thought.

Slowly I lifted him by the head and eased him back on to the pillow. Gently I covered him up to the neck, and tiptoed

out of the room. Out on the verandah, though I sat down by the fireside, I shivered. Instinctively, I raked the fire. The fire was dying away.

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dedicated to him. It is still there near the village Shahzadpur, 12 miles from Jammu. On the 30th December, every year, we gather together for the annual function.

*As far as I know, nobody was ever permitted to stay in the Kutia; and nobody ever did. Probably I was the only exception. It was because of the restriction that I had not told Bawaji about Beli's presence in the Kutia.

After some time-I went in again. Bawaji was lying on his back, fully stretched out-covered not up to the neck but all over. I had never seen him sleep so well. But he had never covered his face like that before.

I came out into the courtyard and stood near the pit. It was hardly five feet deep, not deep enough to kill me-if I fell.

Why had Bawaji wanted it to be more than ten feet deep? That is what he had desired last night while giving instructions to me about the last rites.

Suddenly, something happened to me and I ran out into the open fields.

I remember having told someone there that Bawaji was no more. Nothing more do I remember But I do remember that the whole world of mine was full of Alaksh Niranjan! It sounded like a voice calling out soulfully:

Alaksh Niranjan!

Alaksh Niranjan!

Alaksh Niranjan!

Bawaji had called out like that so often!

The night broke away and the day broke in-the 30th December 1935. I sat in the doorway waiting-For whom? No idea.

Someone came and said: "Some while ago what made you run so fast ?"

He gave me a badly torn piece of cloth and said: "Probably it is yours.

I looked at the dhoti I was wearing. It covered me only up to the knees.

"Oh, while rushing through the fields, my dhoti was caught in thorns--and to free myself I tore off a part of it," I said.

"Better wear pyjamas now. It's cold," he said.

Soon Sant Ram came, sat down by my side-and sighed : "So-it is the end."

After a while, I took to a path that led me quickly to Jammu town. Beli was not at home. He was out to arrange whatever was needed for the last rites. I went about a little, met a person here, a person there and came back to the Kutia.

People began to arrive-not a crowd but only a few. Gopal was there-then Beli came. Mataji arrived soon afterwards. Pir Sandhya Nath* reached about the same time.

Sitting all by myself, I watched them going about....No one asked me anything and I had nothing to tell them-an outsider that I was.

Presently Kanwal Nain's great-grandson arrived, accompanied by his father.

"Where is Kanwal Nain? Will he come ?"

"No. He has sent us instead."

Pir Sandhya Nath and his disciples brought Bawaji out, clothed in "gerua alfi" and adorned with marigold flowers. There he sat on the altar as if for a portrait- and not for the last rites.

There was some commotion. ...I saw children crowding the doorway. Suddenly a voice was heard to say: "Don't send them away. Give them something to eat."
I went in and looked into the pots and pans. All empty. No water, nothing whatever, not for preparing one meal even. But...
Suddenly I remembered: Only a week before I had bought a box of sweets for Bawaji. It was there.
Presently one of Pir Sandhya Nath's disciples walked up to me and said: "Make Bawaji face the east.
I did it easily-no stiffening of the limbs.

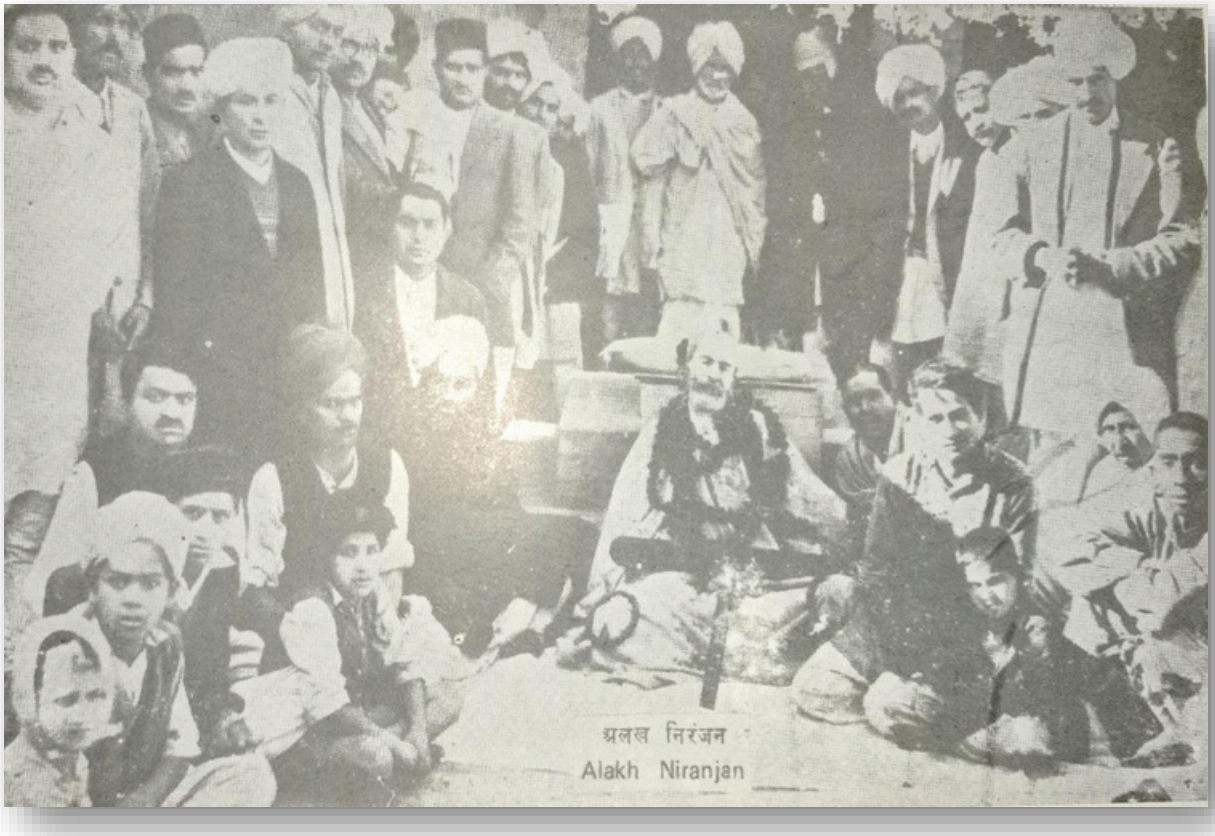
"Can't you also bring the upper lip and the lower lip together?"

"Here! Is that all right?"

For a while Bawaji sat, eyes closed, lips sealed. For the fun of it-to me it seemed. Suddenly I felt as if Bawaji gave out a hearty laughter.

Spontaneity of laughter brought a smile to my face also.

*Pir Sandhya Nath was a Nath Sadhu and was the head priest of an ancient temple-Pir Khoh (Jammu)- on the bank of the river Tawi.



Iturned my gaze towards Bawaji. He sat smiling-lips parted, one tooth showing.

"Let it be as it is. So heartening is his smile," Gopal pleaded. Placing his camera stand on the ground, someone from amongst the people present said: "He is full of it."

All sat down, or stood up, as directed-while Bawaji sat smiling.

"Ready! Don't move! Steady!" The camera clicked. By my side sat Kanwal Nain's great-grandson. It was the first and the last time that anybody had ever been able to photograph Bawaji.

Lightly touching me on the shoulder, Beli said: "Now Bawaji's body will be laid to rest."

Hard to clothe my feelings in words! I was too mystified to think of anything...not even of what Bawaji had said the previous night in reply to my direct question: "Where shall I go now ?"

One by one they came and paid their last respects-while I stood lost, leaning against the flagstaff.

Then I heard a voice: "Remember the day you came ? Don't forget the deal.

In response to the call, as it were, I walked up to where Bawaji sat, and said: "I'll honour my word."

Beli and I carried Bawaji to the edge of the samadhi, the pit. "As per Bawaji's instructions the pit is as deep as he wanted it," he said.

I lowered myself into the pit and looked up. Beli and Gopal lowered the body as I raised my hands full length.

"As you raised your hands full length, we handed the body to you. You lowered it gently and placed it in the specially prepared niche there.

"You were soon busy covering up the body with sugar* that

*The body is first covered up with sugar. The pit is then filled with earth.

We passed on to you from above. At last you looked up and called: 'Beli, Bawaji wants you. Come here."

"I was soon by your side. Hands folded, eyes closed, you fell on your knees. Suddenly you looked up and said: 'Beli, Bawaji wants his face to be kept uncovered.'

"I uncovered the face.

"You were bending over-probably you wanted to touch the ground with your forehead.

"You bowed low, lower, still lower.. and then...suddenly you cried out: 'Ba! Baa! Bawaji!' I can't find words to describe the state you were in."

It was Beli who narrated it all to me sometime in February 1936, in reply to my query: "Beli, what happened on the 30th December 1935 ?"

What had really happened on that fateful day, I have no idea whatever. All I can say is that with that cry something in me died-maybe my very own self or a part thereof. For I have been told: "Moments later, the people assembled there found your voice, bearing and the very mannerism changed beyond recognition-a complete transformation as it were.

Come on, friends, let us now see what life and the Life- giver should mean to you and me and all.

May God bless you. OM!

BOOK II

THE HINDU BELIEVES

LORD KRISHNA DECLARES

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मा ंनमस्कुरु ।

मामेवैष्यिस सत्यं ते प्रयतजाने ेप्रियोऽसस मे ॥

सवधयमान्प्रम्् परत्यज्य मामेकं शरण ंव्रज ।

श्रहं त्वा सवपयापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यिसम मा शुचः ॥

(TheGita-XVIII--65, 66)

Arjun * ! Be deeply mindful of Me and religiously devout.Sayyour prayers in truth and all solemnity. In my turn, I do heartily affirmthat your life, its aspirations and doings do find their fulfilment in Me and Mealone.

Dear friend that you are, do readily transcend your own make-believe notions about life's everyday worths and values and look up to Meand Me alone for comfort, refuge, direction and the Way.

Lest you should feel uneasy and be distressed, I may assureyou that you shall be blessed, and I will absolve you from all your sins-committedor ever wished. For, I am the Saviour and your redemption is My task, My concern. You are ever dear to Me, hence be in peace.

Arjun here represents man and his aspirations.

I-NOW DHARMA-ITS ENUNCIATION

INVOCATION

Aspirant! Start your day and the prayer with:

Asato maa sad gamaya!

Tamaso maa jyotir gamaya!

Mrityor maa amritam gamaya!

असतो मा सिगमि ।

तमसो मा ज्ीयितगमयि ।

मृत्ीोमा यअमृतृ ुंगमि ।।

O Lord!

Lead me from the unreal to the Real!

Lead me from darkness to Light!

Lead me from the transient (नश्वरता) to the Eternal (अमरत्व) That is!

OM! OM! OM! OM! OM! OM! OM!

Aspirant! End your day and the prayer with:

सवे भवन्तु ुसुखिन:

सवे सन्तु यनरामिाः ।

सवे भद्राखण पश्न्तिु ु

मा कश्श्वद् ुिःुिभाग भवेत ।।

Sarve bhavantu sukhinah,

Sarve santu niraamayaah.

Sarve bhadraani pashyantu,

Maa kashchid dukha bhaaga bhavet.

May one and all be happy and in comfort.

May one and all be happy and in good health.

May one and all do well and be happy.

May one and all be blissfully free from anxiety, want and suffering.

OM, OM, OM, OM, OM, OM, OM!

NOW DHARMA: ITS ENUNCIATION

A healthy aspect of human history is the story of men of faith, courage and spiritual stance. Their readiness to fight for a human cause is their only strength. The power of men committed to do good is unpredictable. The moment this commitment (Vrata, a) translates itself into a movement, it sparks off a revolution--even a new faith. To me the faith so sparked is Dharma.

There are many faiths that men subscribe to, but there is only one religion of man.

WHAT IS DHARMA

What is Dharma? It rises from the deep anguish of the human soul to be free from all that hems it in. Its dynamism that is born of man's will to survive (Sat), helps him to progress and strive for self-fulfilment. Neither a senseless venture, nor a leap in the dark, but it is the cutting edge of man's higher aspirations. To his life it gives a deeper meaning and a meaningful purpose. It is the true human spirit that inspires respect for human rights and forbids men to violate them. By faithfully following the tenets of Dharma, man builds up moral stamina that helps him to live with dignity, confidence, courage and faith.

By living it, the prophets sanctified Dharma, and the saints sacrificed their all to live up to it. That is what gave it a sublime dignity and profound solemnity.
It highlights the virtue of human dignity and arouses man to the beauty of a virtuous life as against the sordidness of sinful living. It makes him a bold crusader for a good cause and a fighter against any abuse thereof.

Man's intellect creates its own problems; and, while trying to solve them, it creates more of them. Though Dharma expresses itself in a simple manner, the so-called philosopher, being given to thinking in terms of complexes and complexities, makes it a complex problm.

Friend! If you care to address your heart in all sincerity, it will respond helpfully to tell you what is Dharma and what is not. We have, in fact, so much identified ourselves with it, that, at times, it seems to live our lives with us. It does encourage us when we do some good and reproaches us for a lapse.
It is this deep involvement of Dharma in our lives that makes it a way of life.

Individually a Hindu may subscribe to any faith, but deep within he believes in and follows Sanatana Dharma. Sanatana Dharma is a way of life and not a

religion as the word religion is usually understood. It is essentially the essence of man's highest aspirations.

Suffering from one complex or another, some people do talk disparagingly of this ancient religion of man. I do not blame them however, because some of its aspects are so subtle that it is not easy to understand them. The Hindus should go deep into its subtleties and educate the dissidents.

As stated elsewhere-anything, howsoever subtle and inconsequential, that affects any possible aspect of life in any conceivable manner is a human problem. Even if the effect of this human problem be infinitesimal, Hindu Dharma does take due note of it. Inspired by it, man's scientific temper and spiritual temper come into action and try to solve it-both severally and jointly. It is because of this trait of Hinduism that we find even purely scientific propositions included in its area of action.

Why don't we Hindus speak with one voice? Why this प्रवप्रा वहुधा विश्न्त Why should the seers describe the One and Only in many ways? Human nature holds the clue to this question:

To get greater aesthetic** pleasure from contemplation of any creative idea, we require some degree of novelty-nascency even. Our ancient sages wisely described the Ultimate Absolute in many ways-not to confuse but to provide a change for the human mind and intellect.

At different times, some of our saints did break away from the traditional religious dogmas to give a new look to our beliefs. That way they helped us to rediscover the essentails of Hindu Dharma and feel the thrill of it. Herein lies the strength of the Hindu way of life.

The essence of Hindu Dharma is its unity in diversity. Its appeal is eternal and its relevance universal. That is what makes it Sanatana-Sanatana is that which is eternally in consonance with the true human spirit, TIME and the times.

Revelations? Blessed by the Lord, untouched by the mind, they come straight from a noble heart.

KARMA IS DHARMA

Now I come to Karma, the most vital dimension of life. Let us study it in the light of what the Gita says:

पञ्चैतायन महाबाहो कारणायन यनबोध मे ।

सार्खुी कृतान्ते ेप्रोक्तायन ससद्धि सवकयमणयाम् ्।।

अधधष्ठान ुंतथा कता यकरण ुंच पृथृश्ववधम् ्।

प्रवप्रववाश्च पृथृक् चेष्टा ैव ुंचैवात्र पञ्चमम् ्॥

शरीरवाङ्मनोसभित्यकम यप्रारभते नरः ।

न्यि् ुंवा प्रवपरीत ुंवा पञ्चैते तस् हेतवः ॥

(XVIII.13.14.15.)

Karma has five dimensions: i.e., five factors-hetus govern all human actions. That is the Law.

(i) The first factor is adhishthaana (f), the locale. No action is possible without involving time, place and circum-stance.

(ii) The second factor is kartaa (f), the doer. Unless someone strives, performs Karma, nothing can be accomplis- hed.

(iii) The third factor is karana (). A karana is a saadhan (A), the wherewithal, the ways and means that a doer employs to perform an action. No action is possible without involving one saadhan or another.

(iv) The fourth factor is cheshtaa , the human endeavour. To make use of the physical force and the other vital energies is cheshtaa. It is a human factor that must come in- to play. It is doing.

(v) The fifth factor is Daivam (4, Providence), the unknown factor. We may call it praarabdha (1), fate, destiny, chance, God's will or God's grace.

Because of the active involvement of Daivam, man's actions beget a deeper meaning and demand of him a greater sense of responsibility.

Friend! Failures should not dishearten you, nor should success flatter. Of the five factors (g) that govern all human undertakings (, Karmas), you are but one. Your authority over the remaining four is not absolute.

No wish, no desire, nor any human striving-good, bad, or indifferent-ever goes waste. After taking note of it, Providence (Daivam, a) sets out to tackle the remaining three factors-adhishthaana, karana and cheshtaa. Naturally it takes

time. An undue haste or an inordinate desire for quick results only spoils matters.

Not that the miracles do not happen : whenever Providence plays a dominant role in the performance of Karma, a miracle is likely to happen. However life cannot be lived by miracles alone, nor miracles happen every day. Providence, after all, is but one factor; there are four others.

What makes Karma a primary force in human affairs? It bridges the gulf between man and god by attracting the active involvement of Providence. (Providence is what the Ultimate Absolute manifests Itself through.)

Again-Of the five factors that govern human activities, you are but one. Even if you want to, the remaining four will not let you idle. Accept the position gracefully and live life fully.

As such, Karma is your Dharma and you should make it an integral part of your life. While at it, you come in direct contact with God through Providence, the prime mover.

The prime mover? It is unique, a thing apart. Not only does it border on human consciousness, but it also runs deep into the realms of Awareness Absolute. That makes it both human and divine-easier for the human spirit to negotiate.

Now Karma-good or bad: An action prompted by man's baser self is like smouldering fire that gives out a lot of smoke. The smoke envelops its (action's) dimensions and man acts in the dark. Being ignorant, he commits mistakes.

An action, inspired by the saner self and conditioned by Dharma, is like a flaming fire that gives little or no smoke. The burning fire lights up all the dimensions of karma and man acts in full light: his actions are enlightened-noble, sensible and rational.

Man of today! You inherit a great beginning: the beginning of the human era-the era of higher values of life. Man being the master of his own destiny is as yet a myth but divi-nity of man is already becoming a fact of life. You may define divinity as you will, but to me it is the cutting edge of the true human spirit. Aspire to live a godlike life and be fired by a human spirit that is in tune with the Infinite. That will make a sage of you, on your way to self-realization.

Do not take life lying down. That will defeat its purpose. Accept its challenge and commit yourself to act with confidence, courage and faith. Commitment implies deep interest and total involvement- whatever the consequences.

AHIMSA-TRUTH OF IT

Humanity today as ever lives in fear. Men are given to vehemence and violence. Suddenly they begin to frown, fume and flash out. They boil, burst out, and they riot, ride roughshod over whatever angers them. They storm and shock and they spread like wildfire destroying all that comes in their way or all that they are afraid of.

War or no war, its hysteria is always there. What a paradox! Wars are fought to bring about peace. Men die to keep up peace. The war hysteria bursts out here in violence, there in gruesome killings and elsewhere as a constant threat to peace. Why? But why? Is not this world of ours the creation of the Merciful One? Is there no remedy? The Giver of life must have some purpose in view. But why such fearful means?

There is such a thing like fear complex. Deny as he may, fighting fears is man's major preoccupation. Ninety-nine out of a hundred suffer from fear and the one who says he does not is the one who is afraid to speak the truth. Alas, all his life man lives in fear of this or that, of life even.

Fear may be good, fear may be bad as the circumstances make it. Basically fear might be irrational but it is hard to reason it out, nor is it possible to will it away. For it is a dimension of the mind* which is an integral part of man's being.

Fear is man's lot that shall last till it has outlived its use- fulness. As things are, anything may inspire awe, excite fear or alarm. Man is scared; he takes fright, might even die of horror.

Fears are various and manifold. Their numbers are ever-

* कामः संकल्पो विविवकत्सा श्रद्धाऽश्रद्धा ।
धृविृ्-प्रधृविृर हरर-धीर-भीर-इत्यिै् सिं मनः ॥

Kama, samkalpa, samshya, shraddha, ashraddha, dhriti, adhriti,. lajja, boldness and bhaya the ten dimensions of the mind. Bhaya is fear complex.

growing with the advancement of civilization and with progress in the field of scientific knowledge. Probably the primitive man was better off in that respect.

Fear of darkness, that of loss of support, and a fear of loud noises, also that of vast spaces-these are some of the natural fears. Others are acquired-be it the fear of not getting enough, the fear of the unknown or an uncertain tomorrow in the modern atomic age.

What is fear? It is an emotion. Corresponding to an emotion there is an instinct. The instinct that corresponds to fear is escape-to seek safety. (Man ducks for protection instinctively.) As we are, the element of fear cannot be ruled out-and our instinct to seek safety is but natural. But that is no remedy.

Human problems are solved by human values. That is the law. Had it not been so, nobody would have bothered about them. According to the ancient seers, Ahimsa as a human value is adequate to meet the challenge of fear, at all levels.

Now what is Ahimsa ? To define it is a problem-for no human value can be expressed adequately. Life is a growing process. How can its values be pinned down to one single proposition? As life progresses, its values grow in meaning, scope and purpose. They take on new roles to play, to be in consonance with life's changing patterns.

In everyday life, Ahimsa means: non-killing, non-violence. That is what this Sanskrit word would normally indicate. But the literal translation is inadequate. It robs Ahimsa of its intrinsic merit, worth and glory as a human value. It reduces it to a mere negative virtue-as all the don'ts are.

Under the circumstances, it is imperative to rescue Ahimsa from those who give it their own meaning and one particular sense of purpose.

As a human value Ahimsa is:

Himsa means killing, violence. Ahimsa is non- killing, non-violencc. As life is, it feeds upon itself and grows. All the living beings live on one another to survive-man included.

Man included? Not in quite the same sense as the flora or fauna. Man is capable of compassion and sacrifice. Though still given to killing and violence, he aspires somehow to transcend this inhuman heritage. He has already solemnly declared: Ahimsa Paramo-dharma. Ahimsa is man's supreme Dharma-a higher human aspiration and a lofty ideal.

Aspirant! So-Man has taken the initiative to practise Ahimsa. He has taken a vow to avoid killing (himsa) although he knows that he will thus be up against the very same factor of life that keeps him alive. Doesn't he kill for food? Is not himsa unavoidable, inevitable? But that does not mean that man should not take to the Ahimsa way of life.* There is nothing unnatural about it. To seek to change the very nature of life is quite in consonance with the human spirit and the law

of evolution. It is natural and legitimate. Change is the essence of all life. How could evolution be otherwise possible?

Ahimsa is a higher value of life. It has yet to prove its mettle however. It is man's passive resistance-Satyagraha- not only against himself but against nature too. He starts with offering Satyagraha against his own nature by ordaining: "Thou shalt not kill." He could not do better. It was the only possible thing to do.

However; man is not yet fully seized of this lofty human venture. He doesn't understand its potentialities, nor has he any idea of its implications. He is indifferent as many people were when Mahatma Gandhi Mahatma Gandhi began his famous Dandi March*. The sceptics scoffed at the very idea of his Salt Satyagraha. They said: "An ounce of common salt picked up from the sea beach will not shake the British hold on India." They jeered: "Gandhi took at the breakfast table the same salt for which the British had already collected the excise duty."

*To illustrate-To oppose himsa is the same as to decry sex. As life is, procreation is not possible without indulging in sex. The one who decries sex knows full well that he owes to it his own coming into being. But that does not mean that he cannot take to the Brahmacharya way of life.

*Non-violent freedom movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi is already a part of the world history.

But, the Satyagraha? It sparked a spirited revolution that shook British imperialism to its roots and gave the down- trodden Indian masses a new face of courage and to their lives it gave a new dimension: an indomitable will to be free!

Now Ahimsa as Satyagraha: it re-ordains man's thinking and gives a new stance to his life. Allow the dynamism of this new-yet as old as life-doctrine to grow and gather momentum. It will usher in a new world order and shall become a force to reckon with. Life itself will then metamorphose and change materially. Man will neither harm nor destroy life: That will be a day of his triumph as a human being.

To sum up: Ahimsa starts as an imperceptible stir in the unconscious, and man protests feebly against senseless killings. Life progresses and with it man moves forward to realize the desirability of a non-violent approach to life and its problems. He tries to think in terms of assuring a place under the sun for all the living beings. The concept of survival of the fittest loses its hold on his mind.

As life grows man starts eschewing violence and feels encouraged by the results. Love begets love and man begins to feel less obsessed with the fear complex. That emboldens him and he gives to Ahimsa way of life its rightful place in his life.

Thus it is that what starts as a feeble stir in the uncon- scious ends up as a powerful spiritual element of life.

Seeker! Inspired by the spirit of Ahimsa, recognise the futility of mutual strife and the desirability of love and under- standing. It has already put man on the path of yoga that urges him to humanize the inordinate desires and dark passions. May God bless him.

Praver is not the means to something but the end in itself.

THE HUMAN SPIRIT AND AHIMSA

When in danger of life even an insignificant little insect is suddenly disposed to violence: it fights for life. Forthwith its soul-force is in a savage battle array and it attacks its potential enemy with all its might. What prompts it to fight is Sat*, the will to live and an animated desire to endure so that life can fulfil itself.

Life is a growing process. There is no finality about it. As it grows, Sat also grows in meaning and scope. In man, this first dimension of life grows into the human spirit.

The human spirit is a unique dimension of man's Dharma. It vibrates with the soul-force that demolishes sloth and fights apathy. Animated by it, man feels inspired to defy decay, defeat death.

The human spirit at times puts man on the war path and he grows into man, the tool-maker, making tools of offence and defence. Man is however a rational being. Whenever he takes to violence, he rationalizes his action as a fight against injustice and a struggle for peace-a dharma yuddha holy war).

So long as man is what he is, he will have to live dangerously. India knows the cost of not having waged a holy war. She lost not only her freedom but also her soul. In the days gone by, her people became possessed by tamasi dhriti* Since tamasi dhriti is the antithesis of the human

* I visualize Sat (8) as life poised against itself with a purpose. With- out this built-in elem evolution is not possible.

*Dhriti is a dimension of the mind, its phenomenon. It is the drive in which are inherent the intiative and the intention to persevere till the desire is fulfilled-

According to the Gita, the tamasi dhriti is:

अधमम धममवमवि या मन्यि ेमसिृा ।

सिामर्ामवन्पिरिीांश्च बुवद्धः सा पार्म ेामसी ।। 18.32

यया स्प्रिं भयं शोकं विषादं मदमि ेि ।

Arjuna ! A person's way of life and thinking is perverse (tamasi) if he deliberately accepts the wrong path as the right one and makes no dis tinction between adharma (that which is against the tenets of Dharma) and Dharma. Such a misguided person usually takes a perverted view of life and its realities.

In short, tamasi dhriti is what causes man to be given to unfounded fears and that which makes him
apathetic, timid and muddle-headed.
spirit, it gave rise to the fear complex and weakened man's will to fight back. As things are, India must rediscover herself. No use mourning the lost generations during the freedom fights. She must pick up courage and build up her national character and be fired by her Dharma, the true human spirit. In the Gita Lord Krishna gave the right guidance that is eternally true- Sanatana. In the Ramayana, the people of India have the most significant human document. Seeker! Let the Gita inspire and let the Ramayana guide. All His life, Rama fought for one human cause or another and gave us Ram-rajya which is even today dear to our hearts. I often tell my friends: "Demolish the spirit of the Ramayana and you destroy the
very basis of Indian culture. The Hindu way of life will lose its grace if the spirit of the Gita is weakened." Do I run down the spirit of Ahimsa by eulogis- ing the Gita and the Ramayana ? No. I instead take up cudgels in its favour by condemning the tamasi dhriti. Men of tamasi dhriti masquerading as men of wisdom know not what Ahimsa is.
What they rationalize as a spirit of Ahimsa is in fact the fear complex. This fear complex distorts human vision and saps man's will to take the right initiative. The Ahimsa way of life? It is what the human spirit grows into as man progresses on the path of self-realization.

"I would like to follow the Path and do yoga-sadhana, but I cannot find time," a friend once sighed.

"I do not believe it. One can always find time for prayer," I said hopefully.

"Listen! I have a large family to support. I must give them a good living. If I were to do sadhana, my work would suffer. What is the use of my counting the wooden beads if I were not true to myself or honest to my clients?"

"To do one's duty is good, but it is not good enough to be preferred to the call of God," said I.

"What shall I do? All the day long I work hard and at night I am too tired."

"But do you really want to pray?"

"That I do. I wish I could."

"God will then surely find time for you. He is the Master of Time."

Not long after, one day, he came to me and said: "Here, now it is 2 o'clock. I am free till 5 in the evening. See if you can initiate me to an easy-to-do sadhana."

"Never let your sadhana become mechanical, a mere routine lacking in deep involvement and spontaneity. Sincerity of purpose and mindfulness are necessary," I advised him while on our way back from a short spell of sadhana.

After a few months, we had a chance to meet again.

"How about life? And how about your chance Acquaintance ?"

"You mean God ?" he asked.

"Of course," I said.

"We are great friends now."

"How about time?"

"Time is no problem. No trouble about that. My Friend helps me in my work. Together we finish it easily. My professional work is more than double of what it used to be, but time taken is even less than half."

"How can that be ?"

"Believe it or not, it is so. As I sit down to work, I feel new life surging up. Only right things occur to my mind and I arrive at the right conclusions-no groping.

Unexpected help saves me from a lot of botheration, and I get more time for sadhana."

"That is fine. Are you happy?"

"Whatever I do makes me happy. Whether in office or at home, I find the area of agreement becoming larger and that of differences narrowing down."

"That helps in life."

"Many a time, my problems are solved as if by a miracle. Because of his involvement, my work is now truly a worship. Life is no hard labour, it is a joyous experience."

"Glad to hear that."

"I do feel the change. So long as God is withme, I am not worried about anything. He is a Friend in need."

We parted-he was on his way to his officeand I had to deliver a lecture to a small group of friends on man's relation- shipwith God.
Prefer faith and confidence to doubtsandmisgivings. Persevere and have the tenacity of purpose. Do not dilly dally,norfalter. Let the mind not waver either.
A wavering mind achieves nothing andithas nothing to offer.

A PROMISEOFDELIVERANCE

सवधयमाम्ेपररत्जि्ि मामेकुं शरण ुंव्रज ।

अहुं त्वा सवपयापेभ्ी मोक्षयिष्ासिम ि शुचः ॥

(The Gita XVIII-66) Undeterred by misgivings and fired by an honest urge to transcend whatever
you are and whatever you ought to be, come to Me, O Arjuna, with unalloyed zeal. In all solemnity I do pledge to set you ablaze with the spirit of Moksha, so that
you shall neither sin*, nor suffer.
* According to the Hindu way of life, the Law of Karma is inexorable. Man suffers or is happy in accordance with nature of his deeds. So, in the Bhagwat Gita, Lord Krishna rightly holds forth the promise of keeping man away from a sinful life. (Deliverance is not from what evil would bring in

its wake-deliverance is from the compulsions that force us to commit sins.) How can a heinous crime against humanity be forgiven by Providence, or not taken note of by the Just One?

To get relief man must turn to doing good to others and not live in a fool's paradise that God would gladly forgive. Repentance? It is a step taken by a sinner to undo what he had done earlier-and is a noble deed in its own right.

But, according to Lord Krishna, to be fired by the spirit of Moksha is an auspicious step taken by man to be free from sin and suffering. It readies him to lead a noble life.

MOKSHA-A FRIEND'S VIEW

Dear Nathji,

I think I sent you a copy of Mr. ... 's convocation address. The more I think on what he has said the more I revolt. 'Release from life' is an inadequate translation of the word Moksha or Nirvana. Put in modern terminology, it is more of a release from a mistaken view of life: It is a dis-illusionment.

It is the restoration of a proper perspective on life; it is a revaluation of values.

This dis-illusionment gives to life a new meaning, a new significance, a fresh charm and a new stance. The dis-illusion- ment however does not rob man of zest for living. It rather adds to that zest in proportion as the dis-illusionment is thorough and complete-the only difference being that his interest is broader and deeper and therefore characterised by a calmness which is usually taken to be indifference by superficial observers. (On the other hand)-channelized as it is within the narrow confines of selfish pursuits, the casual interest shown by the ordinary person makes noise, raises much dust and creates thereby the illusion of a deeper involvement-while it is not. Think of the silent flow of a great river in the plains and the terrific rush of a hill torrent. Nothing short of folly it is to mistake the former for weakness and the latter for strength.

If people have misunderstood an ideal, that does not mean it should be demolished. An attempt has to be made to make people understand it. How often we ourselves are misunderstood? Do we commit suicide for that reason?

An ideal is a living force that should not be trifled with. Moksha as an ideal has withstood the ravages of time. The winds and blasts of doubts and misgivings have not been able to shake this Himalayan human aspiration. It is very much there despite the clamouring critics of our (Hindu) way of life.

It is a mistake to think of the past, particularly of a nation, as a dead entity. Our past is a living force that courses through the veins of millions of people, conditions their present actions and beliefs, and is silently moulding their future.

Material prosperity is not a new ideal. Time and again peoples of the world have lived it and found it wanting. This very goal is once again on trial everywhere. The frustration which goes with it and the blind forces of strife and unrest that it lets loose, are already creating doubts about its life- worthiness in the minds of the thoughtful.

Because of exclusive emphasis on material prosperity, civilization after civilization has met its inevitable doom and gone into oblivion. India alone is an exception, a solitary survivor. It still stands in spite of centuries of slavery.

The tenacity and grimness of resolve which an average Indian shows in face of adversity is unrivalled. Life's jerks and jolts that break other people, steel his heart. And he faces life reassured that everything would come right in the end. What sustains him even in adversity? Whence this courage and strength? They flow from his robust faith and emanate from the firm hold he has on life.

The average Indian's contentment at the bare subsistence level is a symbol of his strength and not of weakness. It is a sign of real independence and a mark of human dignity. Dignity and lust for material prosperity are poles apart. A sense of human dignity ennobles man and he observes all the proprieties that go with a dignified behaviour.

A passion for material prosperity, love of luxury and wanton indulgence in it debase man. That is a thirst unquenchable, a craving that always cries its wares. It acts like an arch-traitor in the breast of man. A hint of privation throws open the gates of human personality to its worst enemies avarice, anger, violence, etc. That and an otherwise dignified-looking man is seen stooping low to swindle and to hit others below the belt-just for a doubtful gain for himself. See him cringing servilely for small favours. What about such an individual's dignity? It was, it seems, a made-up affair- trumped up by the artificial aids that wealth provides.

In fact it contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction.

A truly dignified person? Look for someone who is virtuous despite his straitened circumstances. Though not many, but some persons are like that. Unless man's virtue is rooted in faith, it is a sham. It will not be able to face the challenge of evil.

Hindus have always been conscious of man's failings and of his inability to judge aright. Because of it, they never made Dharma an end in itself. Dharma is just a means to an end. It steers clear of the obstacles and keeps man on the Path.

Speaking of Dharma: To make Dharma a goal is to defeat the very purpose of life-to miss the fun of it. Who loves the road for its own sake? Unless it leads somewhere, people would rather go into wilderness to blaze new trails.

Moksha is a coordinating force in a Hindu's life, very hard to be written off. It expects us to give Kama, Artha and Dharma just the importance that they deserve at any one time.

Last! Though Moksha does not aim to deprive man of his daily bread, it does point out however: "Earn whatever you need with honour and by honourable means."

Yours,

Bhatia

MOKSHA-A WAY OF LIFE

Moksha is not the proverbial carrot that makes the mule go on and on, nor is it some vague aspiration to attain a make- believe state of existence wherein man will not have to toil and toil and die most ignominiously. It is a way of life that gives a sense of destiny divine to man and helps him to discover life's deeper meaning and its true purpose.

With one revealing sweep, the spirit of Moksha enlivens man's spirits and lo! he is aglow with the joy of living. It sparks a new zest for life and inspires him to aspire to new heights of human dignity.

Inspired by it man quests in spite of God being seemingly beyond his mind and intellect. Because of it he is ever restless and never at peace. He even seeks the higher truths of life- despite the best offered by the worldly might.

I will not be wrong either if I were to state that the spirit of Moksha fires the downtrodden to fight for their right to live with dignity. It sets their hearts aflame to revolt against curbs of any sort and they gladly wade through a river of blood to make the world safe for the righteous.

Again; such is the miracle of the spirit of Moksha that man himself salvages death from some dark abyss and sets out to give it a new face-lift. Lo! From underneath the sheaths of dark forebodings and baseless fears, death emerges as a joyous hope, a promising future. Man's spiritual endeavour gets a new edge that cuts through all the obstacles and he becomes free from the morbid fear of being doomed to utter annihilation.

Because of many other miraculous finds, the spirit of Moksha emerges as the supreme value of life that opens up new horizons beyond life and death. It animates man with higher aspirations and adds new dimensions to his thought

and endeavour. As man progresses spiritually, the Moksha way of life becomes more and more vocal and pronounced in what- ever he does.

Aspirant! Moksha is an aspiration sublime. It is essentially a human venture. Fired by it, aspire to take humanity many a moral and spiritual step forward. Saints' lives and the prophets' ways of life should inspire confidence and dispel fears. Fear not, nor hesitate to strive for a spiritual break- through. Surge forward and progress on the path of self- realization.

Show a strong sense of responsibility and be worthy of what God has given to you. Let things of the spirit be not made to serve wordly ends. Live sensibly and have the courage to differ with the ungodly. This is the goal that the spirit of Moksha at first sets forth!

To adhere to any aim in life requires a strong sense of purpose and plan. Nothing could be more inspiring than Moksha- the ultimate of man's aspirations.

II-NOW YOGA: ITS DIMENSIONS

THE EIGHTFOLD PATH OF YOGA

Now the Eightfold Path of Yoga: Its eight dimensions are: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

Yama: It enjoins: (i) Ahimsa (अदहसुंा), (ii) Satya (सत्ा), (iii) Asteya (अस्तै), (iv) Brahmacharya (ब्रह्मचि)य, (v) Kshama (क्षमा), (vi) Dhriti (धृयृत), (vii) Daya (ाी), (viii) Arjava (Arjava), (ix) Mitahara (समताहारा), (x) Shaucha (शौचा).

(i) As a human worth, Ahimsa is non-violence. It is not acting in defiance of the human spirit. It is a human approach to all problems.

As a higher value of life, Ahimsa is to realize the funda- mental truth that Atma (soul, the Self) is imperishable, immutable. Not to strive for realization of this fundamental truth is Himsa.

(ii) As a human worth, Satya is to state faithfully but sensibly what one's unimpaired, healthy sense-organs convey. It is truthfulness.

Not to state correctly what the healthy sense-organs convey is an untruth. It is a wrong use of the sense-organs. Misuse begets injury: an untruth affects their competence. That is why it is not desirable to tell lies.

As a higher value of life, Satya is to realize that from God emanates whatever there is.

(iii) As a human worth, Asteya is to refrain from stealing. It is not to covet what is legitimately not ours.

As a higher value of life, Asteya is to strive for self-realization.

(iv) As a human worth, Brahmacharya is the state of not allowing one's mind to associate sex-feelings with any other person except one's own spouse.

Generally speaking, it is to humanize the brutality of an inordinate desire-desire not only for sex but also for revenge, inordinate gain, etc.

As a higher value of life, Brahmacharya is to follow the path of God-realization.

(v) As a human worth, Kshama is forgiveness. It is for- bearance. To make allowance for the failings of others makes it easier to forgive. Thinking from the point of view of the offending person gives you a better understanding of an explosive situation.

As a higher value of life, Kshama is humane living. It is to lead a God-fearing life.

(vi) As a human worth, Dhriti-the operative part of the mind-is individual volition with a difference. It is the will to endeavour and to persevere in one's effort till the objective is achieved. It is the intention in which is inherent initiative, perseverance and fulfilment as one integrated whole.

As a higher value of life, Dhriti is to realize: "Aham Brahma asmi. I am That, the Imperishable."

(vii) As a human worth, Daya is kindness. It is to be kindly. Fear of God and deep love for the human values makes it possible for man to live it.

As a higher value of life, Daya is to realize the omnipresence of God.

(viii) As a human worth, Arjava is to be upright: It is not to resort to unfair means. It is to be candid, fair and frank.

A's a higher value of life, Arjava is the spirit of friendliness: it is to feel being one with all.

(ix) As a human worth, Mitahara is moderation in eating. It is temperance. It is to eat to live. To live to eat is gluttony.

Fasting is not essential unless advised by a doctor. I would suggest regular habits and an occasional change of diet. Relish what you eat and digest it. Let eating be a pleasure and not a task.

As a higher value of life, it is to be prudent but not a prude.

(x) As a human worth, Shaucha is purity of mind and body. Meditation and prayer take care of the mind. Regular habits and a sense of cleanliness take care of the body.

As a higher value of life, it is to lead a clean life-upright, straightforward.

The second step is NIYAMA: It enjoins: (i) Tapah (तप), (ii) Santosha (सतुोष), (iii) Dana (ानि), (iv) Astikata (अश्स्तकता), (v) Ishvara Parayanata (ईश्वर परिाणता), (vi) Siddhanta Vakya Shravana (ससद्धान्त वाक्् श्रवण), (vii) Hri (ह्री) (viii) Mati (मयत), (ix) Japa (जाप), (x)Vrata, (Vrata).

(i) As a human worth, Tapah is to do penance meaningfully, mindfully and purposefully. No meaningless self-denial, nor senseless self-torture. It is to strive for self-fulfilment and self- realization. Tapah gets a meaning and a purpose only when a creative urge, the soul-force, impels man.

As a higher value of life, Tapah is to ponder over the two eternal questions-(a) the purpose of whatever is, (b) the purpose of being.

(ii) As a human worth, Santosha is to feel contented with whatever one's honest effort fetches. It is to accept gratefully what God gives. A contented person endeavours in peace and avoids unnecessary stress and strain.

As a higher value, Santosha is to accept God's will being supreme and to lead a malice-free life.

(iii) As a human worth, Dana is to share with the less fortunate what you get or what you have got-even if sharing means hardship. It is to perform benevolent actions for the needy with no expectation of material reward: something inspired by a spirit of social justice.

As a higher value of life, it is to view charitably the failings of others. It is to have benevolent feelings towards those in need or in disfavour.

Given the choice, I would prefer charity to poverty. A poor man has nothing to share. A saint once blessed a devotee thus: "May the Lord bless you with a son

who should be neither a king nor a saint but a wealthy man with a charitable disposition. Both the king and the saint will knock at his door to seek his aid."

(iv) As a human worth, Astikata is to have a firm belief in the goodness of man. Trust begets trust. It is to respect the human values of life.

As a higher value of life, it is faith in God-implicit, abiding and soul-stirring. It is to aspire to live higher values of life.

(v) As a human worth, Ishvara Parayanata is to have confidence in the wisdom of the Masters and to obey them.

As a higer value of life, it complements Astikata. It is to have faith in God and be devoted to Him. Man cannot be left to his own devices, nor allowed to drift aimlessly. Let deep, even blind, faith in the Omnipotence of God be his moorings.

(vi) As a human worth, Siddhanta Vakya Shravana is to know the fundamental truths of life that man lives by..

As a higher value, it is clairvoyance, anubhava (अनुभव), anahata nada (अनाहत निा), the voice of silence. Man should do yoga sadhana for these attainments.

(vii) As a human worth, Hri is to be careful about some- thing being proper or improper. It is a natural urge to be virtuous and not to commit a sin.*

Neither always defy the norms, nor be too much afraid of the opinions of others. It is sober and sane to act right and to repent in case something turns out to be wrong at any stage.

In the absence of a right guidance, it is difficult to say whether something is right or wrong. An unfounded guilt- consciousness becomes a health problem. It begets mental disturbance. So great care should be taken while practising Hri. A robust good faith in the benevolence of the Lord is needed.

(viii) As a human worth, Mati is to judge rightly and to act accordingly. It is the right initiative and a right sense of purpose and direction. It is a sincere desire to do right.

As a higher value of life, Mati resolves a crisis of commit- ment or faith and rehabilitates man physically, mentally, morally or spiritually.

Mati helps man to find his true identity, true vocation also. Most of the unaccounted-for restlessness and misery is because of many people being misfits in life.

Which way to turn is often man's dilemma. A wrong turning may spell ruin. Man cannot take to the wrong path,

To me the word sin means a human failing-nothing more, nothing ess. Unless man is made to feel being responsible for his actions, he will always blame Satan for misleading him.

once Mati becomes his way of life. (ix) As a human worth, Japa is to recite a mantra *, or any other prayer, and to
continue to do so for some time. Usually the recitation is in a tone so low that no one else can hear it. Once a person transcends both the mind and the body, japa automatically
becomes manana (), a higher value of life.

(x) As a human worth, Vrata is to commit oneself to a religious act. It helps man to build his character. It unravels mind's inherent powers.

To commit oneself to act even against one's own nature, is what distinguishes man from the beasts. As such it is a higher value of life.

Asana Primarily, it is to sit cross-legged on the floor. The head, the neck and the spinal cord are kept in a straight line.

Asana puts you in a proper frame of mind for yoga sadhana**. It becomes more helpful when one can sit for long in that posture. You sit steady and the mind is at rest.

One should not however worry about asana too much. Just as water finds its level, proper asana suggests itself. That is my experience. Some of the asanas I practised earlier but read about them much later.

Vira, Siddha, Padma and Sukha-usually these are the four asanas for meditation. Take up any one of them for sadhana. Brisk morning and evening walks and keeping regular hours ensure good health. Pranyama as a physical exercise keeps man active and energetic. It brings a charming glow to his face-natural.

Yoga as a system of taking exercise is commendable. It is a science of life that not only animates but also rejuvenates. It promotes good health-and keeps man

young. It releases useful cosmic energies to develop human potentialities. And it heals when someone is sick. Many physical ailments can be

That which when recited or contemplated gives a sense of destiny or a sense of repose-is the mantra. **In the present context, sadhana is to practise yoga. And a sadhaka is one who does sadhana.

treated successfully by Yoga-therapy. This system of taking exercise teaches the know-how of deep relaxation. And
deep relaxation is vital for the hard- pressed tensed up man. I may specifically mention Shava Asana for relaxation. It is the best tranquillizer there is.

Pranayama: Primarily it is to control breath through Puraka, Kumbhaka and Rechaka. Puraka is to inhale. Kumbhaka is to hold one's breath after inhalation or exhalation. Rechaka is to exhale. The operative part of Pranayama is Kumbhaka, the vital pause. The duration of
the vital pause is to be gradually increased.

By practising Pranayama, man can control the mind and the sense-organs. It is a natural way of soothing shattered nerves and relieving tension. In these days of inordinate rush and crush, it is essential as a regular way of life. Besides improving health, it helps man to develop the extra-sensory perceptions.

Pranayama Prana+Ayama.

Prana is the breath of life. It is the vital air, it is the principle of life.

Ayama is to control, to expand or to extend.

Thus Pranayama (Prana+Ayama) is to control Prana and develop its potentialities. As a sadhana, it ultimately leads to spiritual awakening, even self-realization. In that case, its field becomes wider: Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana and Dhyana integrate themselves into one single sadhana.

PRATYAHARA: As a human worth, it is to restrain the mind from following its own impudent whims.

As a higher value of life, it tends to stop an aimless drift at any level. At one time, I felt tempted to bracket it with Niyamas. Later, I let it companion Dharana-the spiritual stance. They complement each other.

Pratyahara is to rally all that is good in man and to set it against the forces of evil.

Now DHARANA, DHYANA and SAMADHI are the three
Prana is also the ultimate of matter. What fills space is prana. But in the present context it is the breath of life.
elements of one single process of meditation**. Dharana is to concentrate on an object. Unity of the mind with its object by contemplation is Dhyana. Both Dharana and Dhyana result in-to be more precise-culminate in SAMADHI.

Let me say it all over again: Yama and Niyama govern our behaviour. They give to our lives a right sense of direction and a strong sense of responsibility.
Asana as a meditative pose helps concentration. Just as lying flat on the back is a natural pose for sleeping, an asana is the proper pose for meditation.
There is something vital in asana. It helps conserve, augment too, the vital elements of life that are released during the process of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

Pranayama and Pratyahara are to man what its banks are to a river. The two banks restrict, restrain and help the river to reach the sea. Pranayama and Pratyahara also restrict, restrain and help man to move on to Greater Life.

Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama and Pratyahara-they prepare the ground for Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. And Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi condition man for self-fulfilment, self-realization.

A seeker learns many new things from a saintly person that might not otherwise occur to him at all.
**To illustrate how Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are related: The hallowed river Yamuna flows on till the holy river Ganga joins it at Sangam, a place of pilgrimage near Allahabad (India). Here, according to the legend, a subterranean current Saraswati appears on the surface- only to merge into the joint stream of Ganga and Yamuna. Hereafter the three together flow on to the sea-the ultimate.

Now Dharana (the hallowed river Yamuna) 'flows on' till Dhyana (the holy river Ganga) joins it at
Sangam, the ecstatic state of the mind that has transcended dvandvas (द्वंदास the pairs of opposites
i.e., happiness and unhappiness etc.). Here Samadhi (the sacred subterranean current Saraswati) rises
from underneath the surface-consciousness and merges into the joint mainstream of Dharana and
Dhyana. Hereafter Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi flow on as one integrated dhriti (धृवि) to the
Ultimate. This integrated dhriti may as well be termed as the yoga-urge.

YOGA KARMASU KAUSHALAM

Today let me talk of yoga in terms of values you are familiar with. Yoga is what brings into order, puts right, coordinates and rationalizes the desire to know. It is the art of living: to live gracefully, graciously and manfully. The Gita says: "Yoga karmasu kaushalam, .िगि कमसुय कौशलम् ्" Yoga is conducive to and has the power to promote merit, adequacy and glory in Karma-man's thoughts and actions.

Yoga is not the art of being given to soliloquies, as some would allege. It is to grapple with the problems of life, or to live in spite of them.

In a yogi the transcendental element of life that transcends pride and prejudice and the false sense of values, manifests itself as right-mindfulness and right-awareness - VIVEKA. The moment a person starts regarding as rational and sound only that which is compatible with human dignity, he is on his way to become a yogi. The sense of direction then dawns upon him and he somehow becomes aware of his destiny.

Again, right initiative at the right time, a sense of destiny, right approach, and sincerity of purpose are the four essentials that enable a seeker to become a yogi; and these very accomplishments he achieves through yoga sadhana.

Yoga not only broadens the shoulders but also broadens man's vision. A yogi becomes considerate and large-hearted. Petty jealousies and ignoble prejudices-no, not for him.

To an aspirant yoga gives purity of heart, inner strength and the courage of his convictions. It steadies the mind and man leads a balanced life. He remains true to his principles and does not retrace his steps in the face of difficulties. By experience he realizes that virtue is not only the most potent force in man's life, but is also a perfect remedy for most of the ills of the world.

Friend! Yoga is an integral part of man's life and is a dynamic force that sublimates the unruly desires and begets-him a strong sense of destiny. To my mind, this dynamic force is the proverbial missing link between man and God-Because of it man becomes capable of revelations, spiritual experiences and emotional integration with God.

Karma is human endeavour. Dharma is the transcendental way of life. God is the ultimate of all human aspirations. Where will they all be if man dies in the human heart?

LIVING THE YOGA WAY SUBLIME

Friend! Yoga gives you an ever growing zest for a fuller life. Not to live the yoga way detracts grace from life's sublimity. It is a prayer not in words alone but in deeds as well.

Yoga bridges the gulf between man and divinity and is adequate to meet the challenge of TIME (काल) AND PRALAYA. It coordinates, complements and harmonizes the various aspects of life, and brings about a rule of law in the realms of human thought and endeavour.

By initiating a strong sense of values, yoga makes man aware of human dignity and he starts feeling reluctant to scramble unceremoniously for material gains. He walks out of the narrow confines of selfish pursuits and his life becomes holy-capable of compassion, renunciation and self-sacrifice.

The yoga way of life is neither exotic nor something extraneous. It is intrinsically human though of universal relevance. It helps man to find his true vocation and gives to his life a new direction and a new sense of destiny. No more aimless drift, nor a wanton waste of precious human stuff.

As man goes on doing yoga sadhana, new dimensions are added to his quest.

Things spiritual manifest themselves and are no longer mere hearsays or myths: True understanding dawns upon the seeker and he begins to view life in its true perspective. Forces inherent in him gather momentum and emerge as sublimated urges and progressive drives. Man becomes capable of leading a noble, dignified, balanced life. His love of life fulfils itself in the spirit of love and sacrifice, which goes a long way to inspire men to lead godlike lives. They break the barriers that separate man from man, and shatter the illusions that plague their minds-making possible thereby for the divinity of man to emerge as an urge sublime. The divinity of man? It shall accomplish what the power of gods could not achieve. Men will walk with God, the Compassionate One, and shall share His glory with HIM!

Alas, we know not much about the life that yoga will ultimately usher us into.

Maybe it will be as far removed from our life as ours is from that of a tree or an animal. Maybe it will then be a new life altogether having nothing much to do with the present one. But that can never be! After having striven so hard, life shall enjoy the fruits of its own labour-and know it too. God will not rob Peter to pay Paul.

As a spiritual stance the spirit of renunciation calls upon man to work selflessly for the good of all. That is the only rational way of viewing this vital human value.

YOGA IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Seeker! Has somebody hit you or done any wrong? Maybe, you have been ill-treated or let down. Don't hit back. A man in quest should not.

Otherwise also; frustration, resentment and impotent rage harm the human psyche. The peace of mind is disturbed and human progress set aside. The human progress? On the spiritual level an individual's loss is a loss of mankind. At that level a single person's gain is the gain of the whole universe- howsoever infinitesimal. That is what the Gita says and I believe.

Now tell me, please: Isn't God, our Lord, omnipresent, all-knowing and all-powerful? If so, how could then anybody hurt you without the Gracious One knowing it? Come on, sir, be a sport, ready to accept your mistake if any.

Now go down on your knees, fold your hands and say: "In the hand that struck and in the words that lashed I failed at first to recognise Thy hand, Thy word. Humbly do I beg forgiveness now and seek Thine grace."

Even if you are not at fault and the other person is to blame, it is all right. For you did have a chance to talk to Him, and it is not a small thing.

Then, not that it is not, a change of heart is possible. The man at fault may relent and make amends. Maybe, the Lord had chosen you to give a new direction to his life. Be assured that God in that case will do you many a good turn for your having helped Him in His task.

"As I walk the trail of life in the fear of the wind and rain, grant me O, Great Spirit that I may always walk like a man.'

A Chorokee Indian Prayer

FOUR DIMENSIONS OF YOGA

Aspirant! Here is an earthen lamp and here is a wick made of cotton wool. Fill the earthen lamp with oil and soak the wick in it. Have you done that? Now place the wick in the right place along the groove made for it. All that you need now is a flame to light the lamp. The touch of fire, the spark, is the THING.

To light the lamp is child's play, but not what I am going to say next. As an earthen lamp is like any other earthen pot, even so yoga is like any other mode

of worship. If the earthen lamp has a specific purpose, so has the yoga way of life.

The earthen pot holds both the oil and the wick. It is their aadhaar (आधार)-their container, their sustainer. Throw one or the other or both, and the lamp will not be lit. To be a lamp of light, the pot and the oil and the wick have got to be integral parts of it.

The earthen pot symbolizes Jnana Yoga. The oil stands for Bhakti Yoga; the wick that burns and gives light is a symbol of Karma Yoga. To be life's guiding star and aadhaar, they have to act as one whole: Man must live them separately and jointly for self-fulfilment.

To repeat: The earthen pot and the oil in it illustrate Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga.

What comes next is the wick-cotton wool made into a slender cord. Before placing it in the groove, its rightful place, it is soaked in oil lest it should smoulder and peter out.

Just as the quest for and the love of the One Absolute Whole (पूण यपरमात्मा)

are the operative parts of Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga, similarly the cutting edge of Karma Yoga is Karma-not any kind of karma but the one that leads man on to God-realization.

Last: As the touch of fire was needed to light the lamp, man also needs a divine spark for spiritual enlightenment. This spark divine is a thing apart-it is Raja Yoga, the fourth dimension.

"Learning is the seed, practice is the field and intent is the water."

Dear.....

Your letter. I am conscious of your difficulties. Hard indeed for man to make decisions or come to the right conclusion.

Now-sometimes to find one's true vocation is more difficult than to find one's own faith. Being in no mood to surmise, I would rather advise you to meditate. Be devoted. Why not make yoga the very way of your life? Right things will then occur to you and fewer mistakes.....

Even if, somtime, you feel lost, meditation is not what you should turn away from. For it is what lights the paths of life and opens up new horizons. It as well

rationally coordinates the multiple directions of life and makes them more meaningful. No drifts, no scatter-brained affair - life is then a wholesome whole.

Marriage? It is worthwhile waiting for the right love and the fight person to come your way. While in quest of the right person, you might have to confront many a situation which may not readily fit into the ideal concept dear to you. How about the possibility of your instinct, you might ask, leading you somehow to the right person? Friend! The instinct is being gradually phased out in man and his volition is steadily and surely coming into its own to take its rightful place in his life. Since when? Hard to tell.

Volition? I can't say what the word would mean to you or to a scientist, but to me the human volition is what the animal instinct has through the ages grown into. Probably, because of that, we are so often left out high and dry and have to make our own decisions. I know, to accept the instinctive direction is comparatively safe and safer still is to be led by a guidance from within. Despite it all, however, I would still recommend choice.

Choice? It is an ability-that is what reflex is not. Thus to be able to choose is what distinguishes a human being from the beast. It is born of free will. The free will is a unique privilege and is a dynamic dimension of the human volition. Is human volition the enigmatic self itself or a vocal dimension thereof? Possibly. Whatever it is-whether right or wrong the choice is conducive to human growth. It makes man aware of being unique and raises hopes that he may one day realize the purpose of his being-even the truth of it. A blessing indeed!

Sincerely,

Nath

Providence (, ैविम Daivam) is the circumstance, the big 'if', that leads man to success or failure in spite of himself.

Dear K...,

You are back home exhausted, after a strenuous day out. Because of some untoward happening, you feel perturbed-the strain is awful. To unburden your mind, you give out a call to your wife. Unknowingly she says something that exasperates you unnecessarily-and you shout at her. Your sweet little child comes toddling but you send him away whimpering. That's too bad. ...Not knowing what to do, you stand awkwardly for a while here, for a while there,

then go to your room. You lie down in bed, get up again and are nervous, tense and restless.

Come on, sir. Put on a soft light. No glare, nor should it be dark in the room. Take a chair and sit down. Be at ease. Stretch your legs fully and rest them on another chair. While doing that, place the right leg on the left one. Clasp both hands, fingers intertwined. Put the right thumb on the left one. That should present no difficulty. Now leisurely place your hands in your lap.

Close your eyes. Watch your breath. After a while, of a sudden, hold your breath. A slight discomfort and breathe in. Breathe gently. Again hold the breath out. Not the sligh- test violence, do it comfortably. Not long after breathe in imperceptibly. Repeat the process several times.

Feeling restful? Now recite OM! in Dhyana-no movement of the tongue whatever. Don't do it if you don't feel like. Just think of God. Be mindful of Him and it will be all right. The Benevolent Father is ready to do anything for you.

Soon the breathing is regular. Feeling restful and sleepy? That's fine.

Tired still? Gently get up and lie down in bed-on your back. Stretch your arms and legs full length. Bring together the legs, and let your feet touch each other. No pillow under your head, please. Let the arms stay alongside. Now watch your breath-and hold it off and on as before. Only voiceless saying of a prayer or the manana of a mantra. Let it be like that for some while. Sleep off your tension and wake up blissfully the next morn.

Sincerely.

Nath

Dear.....

Your letter. Life becomes a problem for him who seeks its deeper meaning-otherwise it goes on on its haphazard path Unconcerned. .neither knowing nor caring to know of its outcome.

Oh, what an awful restlessness sets in when God blesses somebody with a vision divine and reshapes his destiny accordingly. Since wishful thinking and a hope for peace, power and plenty had been animating his desire to quest, the lack of it all gives the seeker a rude shock-for he had never bargained for that.

Friend! At times Providence picks up all the thorns that beset a seeker's path. At times you have to pass through a baptism of fire-do titiksha, do tapah. As you

follow the spiritual path different modes of worship and sadhana spring to mind and you practise them-sometimes with fervour, sometimes half-heartedly. As these self-inspired worships go on, you are at peace and in comfort only when this divine restlessness is there. If I remember aright there was a Greek God who could sleep peacefully only when he had snakes wriggling in his bed under his feet.....

As you grow spiritually, life begins to change, even metamorphose, in terms of direction, plan and scope. Flinging diffidence to the winds it drifts away from its outmoded moorings in quest of new lands, new horizons. The by now deep-seated sense of direction and destiny fires your heart with the true human spirit to meet the challenge of your higher aspirations and the pleasant surprises their dynamics might spring .....

How about the life of a seeker? Like a river flowing in between its two banks on to the sea-it flows on, on its way to the Truth Absolute, animated by two aspirations sublime- creative endeavour (tapah) and the sacred quest (jijanaasaa).

Sincerely,

Nath

Wisely said by someone: "If there is a way and not a sage, it will not expand. If there is a sage but no way, not much good will result. When a way and a sage are found together, all men will then become cultured and enlightened."

NO FALSE SENSE OF RESIGNATION

A man once came, sat down in a chair, and snapped out: "Oh! The Lord is Great. I accept His will. Suffering has always been the bhakta's (saint's) lot."

Because I had met him earlier, I cut him short and said: "How about that affair of yours?"

Before I could go on, he burst into more sobs and tears than words, and continued: "Please don't mind...I often go into ecstasy."

Unmindful of if I had to say something, he kept on: "All is well by God's grace. He always takes care of a bhakta's affairs."

Jerking himself into a sort of ecstasy, he kept up: "Now we have come to you to see what you have to say." (No one else was there; he was only using the pronoun 'we' instead of 'I'.)

The gentleman opened his eyes a little, swept the room with one furtive glance, and closed them again. That gave me a chance (and I did not miss it) to butt in: "Would you like to add anything to what I have been writing?"

Without waiting for a reply, I read out: "You have your problems. Try to solve them. No false sense of resignation, nor show yourself off as a self-styled martyr to solicit praise and reverence. The so-called acceptance of yours might as well be due to your lacking in courage to face the situation. You do no favour to God, hence expect no reward. Be grateful to Him instead, for making you conscious of your failings."

Blessed is the error that inspires greater endeavour.

NOW A SAGE-HIS CREDENTIALS

After having said something about the way, let me now say something about the sage:

No single thought, no single feeling, no single mind, no single heart can ever contain a spiritual flame. When it bursts, it lights up all the paths of life. Like a river in spate flooding the areas around, the spiritual fervour of a sage overflows and spreads. To a hard-pressed seeker, he is what a green oasis is to the weary traveller in the waterless desolation. To men, who are still groping in the dark, a sage's life serves as a flaming beacon and his achievements boost the morale of th: aspirants.

A sage soothes those who suffer and lament. His life shows what the Benevolent One is like. In him is beautifully mirrored the Kindly Light. God speaks through him to break the monotony of man's groping.

From the higher human aspirations, God fashions a sage and gives him something of Himself too. The sage lives what others aspire to, or preach. He paves the way to human progress by his spirit of service, sacrifice and devotion. Men endeavour with greater confidence and fervour, and feel more inspired to see one like them to be on the way to God-realiza- tion. They flock to him with pride.

What goes into the making of a sage?

The sage watches his thoughts and emotions. At peace with the world, he does his allotted job without a murmur. No tension. He is pleasant and sweet to talk to, and has a sense of justice and fair play. It is against his nature to take undue advantage of others' ignorance and their weaknesses. He speaks only when

essential and that too with a sense of responsibility. No backbiting, no gossip, nor he indulges in slandermongering.

A sage soothes the frayed tempers and creates no strife. He shares with others what he has, and doesn't covet what is not legitimately his. He returns good for evil-if that is conducive to human progress. No giving in otherwise.

He does not parade his honesty, nor does he ridicule others. He is honest and is humble and doesn't regret being so. Nor does he ever grumble that the noble souls suffer and the evil ones prosper. He is charitable towards others' failings. He believes that men do err but are also capable of retracing their footsteps.

A sage does not merely condemn, nor make a hue and cry. Quietly he helps a defaulter to make amends. For him, he prays: "Lead Kindly Light lest he should sin again." He does good to the unfortunate and, in thankfulness, they pray for him. Nothing is nobler than to help a sinner to rehabilitate himself morally and spiritually.

In a sage humanness stands out as his way of life. To him love of man, fear of God and respect for the spirit of the age are an integral part of his religion. Nothing stimulates him more than a dedicated life-dedicated to selfless service and fervent prayers.

A sage does not look down upon men of evil ways. Nor does he ignore them as being unworthy of his compassion. The men are ill, the sage thinks. They are a challenge to his sense of service to mankind. They must be nursed back to moral and spiritual health, he feels.

He acts dignified and looks benign. To a child he is a benevolent helper, a good friend to the young, and is an under- standing companion to the old. A sage is truly human, blissfully lost in the love of man and God.

His response to the calls made on him by the sense-urges is conditioned by Dharma. He restrains, controls and sublimates them, and gives them the proper sense of direction.

A sage is God-fearing, but is not afraid to do the right thing.

He is obliging, patient, simple and frank. He is humble, but not a servile flatterer. He is contented with what his hard work earns, and strives for more if that falls short of his expectations or requirements.

He is neither treacherous, revengeful, nor is he arrogant and quarrelsome. He is neither self-opinionated, nor conceited. He has a fine spirit of accommodation but is ready to revolt against an unrighteous oppression.

Sometimes his silence is more eloquent than speech. In him the questing human spirit finds an answer to many a question that baffles seekers. His talk is wise and it enlightens. Higher truths of life are eager to express themselves through his life-for better effect. Even Providence seeks him out to sponsor many a noble cause.

Last! A student of science knows how to form crystals. From the mixture of good and bad in the world, the good is crystallized into a sage's purity of thought and men's nobility of character.

A sage is divinity come to life in man. In him humanness is ready to blossom forth into godliness.
Aspire to be what he is!

In a sinner life drifts aimlessly and comes to grief. In a sage life moves purposefully and triumphs!

III- NOW SHABDA : ITS DYNAMICS

SHABDA: ITS DIMENSIONS

At the moment I am not concerned with sound as a whole but only with that aspect of it which is shabda-the speech-our language. About shabda, too, for authenticity's sake, I will let Panini, the ancient Hindu grammarian, state how it is spoken :

"आत्मा बुद्धिा समेत्थिान्य ्मनो िुक्तोप्रववक्षिा।

मनः किाश्वनमाहश्न्त स पे्रेरियत मारुतम् ्।

मारुतस्तुरसस चरन् ्मन्द्रं जनियत स्वरम् ्।"

Through buddhi (fa, intellectual faculty) theself (of a person) becomes conscious of the objects (4) and creates in the mind(of the person) a desire to speak (vivakshaa, ~~प्रवक्षा~~). The thus urged mind(of the person) activates itself and strikes at kaaya-agni (~~किाश्वन~~) the element of fire present in the body. In its turn, the kaaya-agni impells another integral part of the body-the maaruta

(through, in the region of the heart) produces the desired speech (मारुत), while passing characteristic of the person concerned and expresses whatever was intended and whatever way it was wanted to be uttered.

Now-keeping my inadequate knowledge at bay, I would quote from "Kadimata"* to explain the process of production of sound:

"स्वात्मेच्छाशक्तघातेने प्राणविुस्वरूपतः ।

मूलाधारे समुत्पन्नः पराख्ी निा उत्तमः ॥

स एव चोवतुंा ुंनीतः स्वाधधष्ठानप्रवजृशूभभतः ।

पश्न्ति्ाख्िामिवाप्नोयत तथैवोध्व ुंशनैः शनैः ॥

अनाहते बुद्धधतत्त्वसमेतो मध्मिाऽसभधः ।

तथा तिोरुध्वगुंतो प्रवशुद्धौ कण्ठिेशतः ।।

ीविाख्यिस्ततः कण्ठशीषतुंाल्वोष्ठिन्तगः

श्जह्वामूलाग्रपृषूठस्थस्तथा नासाग्रतः क्रमात् ।।"

"When a person wishes to speak, the process of production ofshabda (speech) starts:

While commenting on Shat-chakra-nirupana one commentator had quoted these lines from "Kadimata". The book Kadimata is not available now.

"At first the shabda is in the form of praana (air, vaayu) in the Mulaadhaara Chakra, at the base of the spinal chord. This aspect of the shabda is called paraa-

shabda (परा-शब्ा).

"As paraa-shabda moves upward towards the region of the heart, it is called pashyanti-shabda ()-that which can be envisioned, perceived..

"As directed by the self, the pashyanti-shabda going upward reaches the region of the heart where it takes a particular form in accordance with the wish of the speaker. This is madhyamaa- shabda (मध्मिा शब्ा).

"Going still upward, the madhyamaa-shabda reaches the region of the throat-the Vishuddhi-chakra. Here it is that in deference to the wish of the speaker the mechanism of speech-production starts functioning. In this process are involved the throat, the head, the palate, the teeth, the lips, the root of the tongue, the tip of the nose etc. These parts of the body play their respective parts for producing the desired speech. This state of the speech is called Vaikhari (),* the language, the lettered speech."

According to another authority, paraa-shabda (shabda in its transcendent state) is the causal aspect of the sound. Unless impelled by the speaker's wish to speak, it, the paraa-shabda, does not rise from the Kundalini in the Mulaadhaara Chakra. However, when impelled, it moves from the Mulaadhaara to the Manipura Chakra-the region of the navel. While on the move, this paraa-shabda is called pashyanti-shabda. (Pashyanti- shabda is that which can be perceived. It is a vision of the sound that is to ultimately become speech.) At this stage the speaker's mind joins the self; thus making the involvement of the speaker greater.....

Guided by both the mind and the self, the pashyanti-shabda moves on from the region of the navel (the Manipura Chakra) to the region of the heart (the Anaahata Chakra) on its way to the region of the throat (the Vishuddhi Chakra). This aspect of the pashyanti-shabda which moves on to the region of the throat

According to the Sanskrit Dictionary:

एक ही शब्द मूलाधार, नावभ, हृदय ि◌ा कंठ के संयोग से क्रमशः परा पश्यन्ती, मध्यमा ि◌ा खैरी–

इन ि◌ार संज्ञाओं ◌ंसे प्रवभवहि होिा है।◌ै

is known as madhyamaa-shabda. Madhyamaa-shabda has an advantage over the pashyanti-shabda because the speaker's intellect (buddhi) also is now there to assist.

After having been given the final touches by the speaker's self, mind and the intellect, the madhyamaa-shabda is now all set to issue forth from the mouth as Vaikhari-the spoken word.

Now, in terms of modern medical science : "Like all complex motor processes, the speech depends on the co-ordinated activities of a number of sensory, psychic and motor areas. For example, when a baby learns to speak, it at first hears the sound of a spoken word (auditory-sensory area), then it tries to understand the full meaning of the sound with the help of other sensory and

associative impressions (Auditory-psychic area). The baby then tries to organise the necessary motor impulses in a particular area called the 'speech centre' (Broca's area). Thus organised, the stream of impulses is passed on to the adjoining pyramidal area, which controls the movement of lips, tongue, larynx, pharynx, respiration, etc. .....i.e., those concerned with articulation. The impulses then travel down the pyramidal tracts to the motor centres of the corresponding nerves. In this way the child produces the first sound."

To me shabda, the uttered speech, is a great human experience. As we have got used to it, we are hardly ever aware of its being a great boon granted by the Benevolent One.

Seeker! Man and his language have come a long way on the path of human progress. Maybe, man is once again weighing anchor in preparation for getting underway on his way to distant lands of mystic sound and a miraculous language. As it once was in ancient India, sound is going to be the future source of energy. That will last till man lasts.....

In the end let me quote one beautiful Latvian saying:

"A LANGUAGE IS A PATH OF SPIRITS ON WHICH A HEART MEETS A HEART."

An eternal question confronts man: the purpose of being.

A DIALOGUE WITH GOD

Aspirant! The revealing paths are many but the goal is one. Friend! Together let us climb the awesome incline of the sanctified mind on to divya vichaara-the animated thought divine.

There! Take your time, rest awhile and follow me on the wings of Pratyahara* across the mystifying ranges of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi (the transcendent state of the mind) into the valley of Madhyamaa-dimly visible in the mystic twilight of revelations of undetermined affirmations. Tarry not in its restless shadows that play hide and seek with your wranglings and shaken beliefs. Crisscross instead further on to Pashyanti-the strangely restful highlands of rambling twilights and exultant outbursts of enlightening flashes of heavenly light.

Here, climb into the chariot of Light Divine (divya prakaash) and be on your way to Pashyanti's awe-inspiring heights. Thrilled and blissful but impatient still-you are on your way. And here is a vast panorama of figures of light glimmering into view off and on. But.....

A dark shadow crosses across your mental horizon when you fail to envision SOMEONE you have been hopefully seeking and expecting to meet. You feel utterly lost and dismayed... Visualize a forlorn child looking for his mother in the lofty chambers of a king's palace. That is how you feel like, and are. Amidst all the grandeur of moving figures and splendour of the heavenly lights, suddenly you begin to feel lonesome and are awesomely unquiet, maybe dismayed.

Suddenly the dark clouds gather momentum and threaten to plunge the whole world of yours into darkness. In the gathering dusk, the moving figures of (spiritual) visions lose their lustre and turn hazy.

Seeker! Grieve not, for that was not your goal. You were off the right track. Come back from the land of shadowy paths before the gloom deepens; for it is a lull** before the storm.

Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are the four dimensions of the Eightfold Path of Yoga. ** In the language of mystics it is Jnana (r) that enlightens the human mind and makes the heart wise.

Behold! A lightning flash! A silent clap of thunder and stormy windless winds are on their voiceless thundering way. Oh, God the Terrible-has descended in a Thing storm. He is taking life out of all that fascinates, attracts or binds. Before your very eyes the beauteous figures are being swept away by the tempest of His fury. Many a sculpture, sculpted so assiduously out of higher human aspirations, crumbles to pieces by its vehemence. Lovely images of make-believe ideologies crash down into distorted out of shape rubble. God means business; and He does! It's time you home in on your heavenly abode and not play truant any more.

Does it mean that God is a tyrant too? Isn't God, our Lord, compassionate? Isn't His tyranny against all human beliefs and heavenly norms? He is a jealous Lover. Whatever comes in the way of your love for Him is burnt to ashes and scattered to the listless winds. Maybe what I say is true, maybe not.

Whatever is. Quick! Retrace your steps. Dear seeker, give a vibrant call to the Benevolent One: "I love Thee and no one else." Go down on your knees and murmur prayerfully: "I adore Thee and Thee alone." Calmly now be seated and close your eyes and seal your lips. Let the ardent breast not heave either. Not the slightest movement of the tongue. Nor any stir of the mind. Here! No words. Only let the inmost approach Him in silence deep, supreme.

Lo, a miracle. The voice of silence has worked it. The raging storms are losing their rage. The All-merciful seems to have granted your prayer. Your face is wreathed in glowing smiles. Oh, the heavenly twinkle in your eyes!

Behold! The exultant twilight embracing the realms of a transcendent mind! Ushas (), the divine usherer, is ushering your inmost to the august presence of the Lord for a dialogue!

MANTRA-ITS DYNAMICS

A mother is thrilled by the first cry of her newborn babe. The cry of the child hurts her not, nor fills her heart with pity-instead it gives her joy and she is moved by a blissful sense of fulfilment.

I call for help and in response to it you rush on to me. The magic of the spoken word bridges the gulf between you and me. The sound at this level is vaikhari-the language, the uttered speech.

Let us study the effect of a spoken word-the shabda and its dhvani (ध्वयन, sound). Even if I do not say so, a word spoken in anger makes you angry. You relish it not, nor like it. A kindly word has real tone! It fills your heart with joy and a sense of gratitude. Why so?

The music is sound. It has reason, rhyme and rhythm. Noise is also sound, but it has neither reason, order, nor rhythm. A melody sounds pleasant and is heartening. When somebody yells and is noisy, annoying it is. You resent. While the rhythm of the music is as if it were in tune with the rhythm of life, the noise is not. It produces a discordant note, it jars. No temper, please. Let us go where the mantras are being religiously (प्रवधधपूवकय) chanted in all solemnity.

A mantra? When written down it is a sentence like any other. When chanted it is a miracle of the language. Chant the mantra or contemplate it in Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi to discover its rhythm divine that elevates intellectually, morally and spiritually. The dynamism of a mantra is a saviour and a sublime blessing.

The mantra? It is what His grace sparks when the Bene- volent One blesses. Once enshrined in it by the Glorious Almighty its dynamism abides for all time as a perennial source of spiritual verve. Down the centuries people have derived strength and stamina from it-not only for their own moral and spiritual growth but also for the good of others.

A mantra again? The mantra is a yantra (ॐ) and not a "formula" as it is sometimes termed. A yantra? The yantra also is not just a symbol, nor a mere mystical diagram-its mysticism has something to do with the occult-the mantra-shakti in the present context. No idle wrangling, nor high- sounding words of praise-experience it to know the mantra- power.

Not magical but divine.

Now let it be that the mantra is a symbol. In the world of man and his symbols-when contemplated a true symbol transcends its known frontiers. That is what makes the symbolic world of mantra worth contemplating and its dynamics worth actualization-realization.

Now when chanted, pondered or contemplated the mantra helps you to experience the same ascendancy of the spirit that was once experienced by the ancient seer to whom it was first revealed. Not only that, it also uplifts the seeker's psyche to the same higher level of consciousness as that of the mantra's presiding deity**. This is a stage of mantra- siddhi*** which a mantra-yogi aspires after.....and everybody prays for.

Now unless you are spiritually involved, mantra-japa (mentally chanting a mantra) does not augment your capacity for spiritual experience. Not an altogether waste however- mantra japa does fill your heart with higher aspirations and prepares the ground for spiritual growth and self-realization.

Again-one aspect of the mantra is its meaning. Know the language of the mantra to know that. The other aspect

The right word is not revelation but preranaa (प्रेरणा)-a sanskrit word. Whatever initiative a man might have taken earlier, at the time of revelation he is passive. In the case of preranaa (प्रेरणा) man's involvement is deeper. (To what extent? It is hard to deter- mine that, but it is there.)

Whenever God urges, inspires or commands-prerita kartaa hai, प्रेरयिता किम है–

man has to rise to the occasion and act accordingly. In this active participation of his, man grows in human stature and becomes spiritually enlightened (ज्ञानी, gyaani).

The initiative taken by man at the instance (प्रेरणा) of the Lord to create a mantra is what makes him a seer, a rishi, a sage. That is what makes the Veda-the revealed knowledge of the world- both human and divine. Isn't divinity of man an accepted spiritual phenomenon?

"A mantra's presiding deity is a mystic identity that is! Though I have experienced that, I cannot express it, nor explain.

*** The word siddhi is difficult to explain. It is not perfection but is realization. Though a who has achieved' mantra-siddhi attains one supernatural power or another, he is not es spiritually enlightened person at all levels. It is in yoga sadhana alone that all the siddhis fulfilment.
of it is the spiritual potential of the vibrations that a mantra produces when chanted or contemplated. These vibrations bring about, inspire also, a specific spiritual condition which helps us to get over the unwholesome tendency to feel jealous and behave irrationally Of course, the depth of this spiritual condition depends on the dynamics of the vibrations produced and on our own spiritual stamina. This spiritual condition is an important landmark on the path of God-realization. It is the kindly light that augurs well for spiritual growth and the dawning of the Flaming Faith (Jnana). Man comes to know of his DHARMA (धम)य and his heart is full of COMPASSION (ाि, dayaa).

Dayaa and Dharma? They remind me of an incident in my early life (1938 probably). Perturbed by not having been able to explain adequately to a friend the words Dayaa and Dharma--I was once out on a mountain road of Simla (H.P.)- not the busy one. Suddenly I was on the alert as I heard someone sing in an abrupt but soulful voice:

ाि धरम नदह ुंमन में ।

मुिडा क्ाि ाि ेिरपण में ।।

DAYAA DHARAMA NAHIN MANMEN!

MUKHDA KYAA DEKHE DARAPANMEN!!

Both the words and the voice electrified me andIcame to a sudden halt-strangely sad and on the verge of tears.

After a while I saw a strange looking young lad climbingup an incline on to where I stood mystified-filled with awe.

"Brother! Can you tell me what Dharma is? Make mewise about Dayaa too?"

The young lad stopped, looked at me, smiled beautifully and said: "Brother! Chant Rama, Rama, Rama and my Rama will showthe way to Dayaa and Dharama.'

Before I could stop him, he was gone....I did not follow him-but stood singing: Hare Rama, Hare Rama. Rama, Rama, Hare Hare! Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare!

The whole incident is fresh in my mind. Hark! Right now the words echo and re-echo in my very being:

Dayaa Dharama nahin man men!

Mukhdaa kyaa dekhe darapan men!!

'Tis not right to behold thyself in a mirror.

When compassion moves thee not, nor Dharma inspires. The meaning of a mantra we can store in our memory but not the vibrations produced by it when chanted. To derive the maximum benefit from the dynamics of the vibrations we are advised to chant, or contemplate the mantra time and again. (Though the vibrations produced by a mantra cannot be stored, the change brought about is abiding-whatever it be and at whatever level that be.)

Whether it is japa, manana, chanting, or the contemplation of a mantra-it should not become a lifeless routine. Sooner or later a routine affair does become mechanical. Once something becomes mechanical, it loses its rasa (रस)-its rhythm, its very essence. Not a helpful sign for moral upliftment or spiritual awakening that a mantra is expected to accomplish.

There are sounds and sounds and sounds. Every sound produces its own specific vibrations. A vibration may or may not have a volume* but it does have a set pattern, its form. For him, who practises mantra yoga or shabda yoga, it is possible to envision it. Being too subtle a subject, I won't discuss it now lest I should confuse you or be myself confused.

Now-the vibrations that are produced, when a mantra is religiously chanted or dynamically contemplated, excite similar vibrations in those who are present and listening. In the beginning they may not be conscious of the vibrations produced but their effect is essentially there. That is why community prayer (, सत-सगुं sat-sang) is recommended. The mantra-diksha also depends on this phenomenon.

To repeat: The mantra is not a set of some chosen words grouped together-In truth, it is a spiritual experience and a mystic phenomenon of universal relevance-i.e., it is all embracing and not relevant to any one specific way of life

or creed only. That is also true of divine revelations and man's spiritual experiences. In the light of this, it is not right to question the validity or the sanctity of a religious prayer, even if we differ. Every prayer is a blessing and a sacred boon. If not-not the prayer then but the man's intent is to blame. May

• Each vibration having a definite identity, entity also, must have all the dimensions-volume too.

the Kindly Light lead the unwary to a solemn prayer and the rightbelief!

Personally I would prefer OM! the Pranava and the Gayatri. TheGayatri is:

ॐ भूभुवयः स्वः तत्सप्रवतुवरेयण्ुंभगो ेवस्धीमदह।

धधिो ो नः प्रचोात् ्ॐ ।।

OM, BHUUR BHUVAH SVAH TAT SAVITUR

VARENAYAM BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAHI

DHIYO YO NAH PRACHODAYAAT, OM

Being aware of the glorious splendour of the Kindly Lord, we pray to the Most High: Inspirit, inspire and fire our hearts and minds with the right initiative and fill our beings with a creative zeal-prime, abiding and supreme-to act in consonance with the true human spirit.

There couldn't be a more exalted mantra than the Gayatri- both in sublimity of its meaning and its dynamics at all levels. It was not only revealed to, but also experienced by Vishwamitra* as the sage strove with courage, faith and hope to get over one crisis after another.

Literally the word vishwamitra means: a friend of the whole universe, a friend of all. Only the sage Vishwamitra's stature could merit divine affirmation!

Friend! Choose your prayer, mantra also. Seek his directions, grace also. Since eternity man is being blessed with one mantra or another, with one prayer or another-but God's

* Whether a legend, an allegory or a symbol-none ever fully expresses that which is in

B~~ecause of it, I will not narrate at length the legend of the Gayatri-avatar~~ana. Still:

According to a legend, the Gayatri was not revealed to the sage Vishwamitra with the spon

a ~~divine communication. Instead it was revealed to him in stages as he pray~~ed and prayed

a ~~life of sustained austerities to get over one crisis after another of identity,~~ faith and voliti

The legend narrates beautifully the story of the sage's confrontations, discomfitures and the agony of the spirit that he had to bear. Not until he could transcend his volition and could sublimate his passion for supremacy that the Gayatri was revealed to him. All and one then gave him his due recognition- as brahma-rishi he was known thereafter.

grace still remains as Absolute (पूण ;पूर्ण purna) as ever. How beautifully a Veda Mantra reveals this unique mystic phenomenon:

ॐ पूणमयिः पूणसयमिुं पूणातय पूणामुयिच्ते ।

पूणस्यि पूणमयिाा पूणमेयवावसशष्ते ।।

Om Purnamadah Purnamidam Purnaat Purnamudachyate!

Purnasya Purnamaadaaye Purnamevaavashishyate!!

That is Absolute*. This is Absolute. The Absolute rises from the Absolute, despite it the Absolute remains (One) Absolute (Whole).

Aspirant! Down the centuries man has come a long way on the road to human progress; hence do aspire and with ardour sublime strive to create a whole world of new ideals, deathless ideologies, purposeful myths and meaningful mytho- logies. But in all solemnity do as well pray and meditate for spiritual stamina and jnana---the wholesome-whole wisdom.

Friend! May God visit and grace every word of your prayer. May He bless and sanctify every thought that rises to edify. Come on, sir, together let us pray: "O Lord, fire our hearts and minds with a creative fervour (tapah) to initiate a new way of life in consonance with the changing human spirit and in accordance with Thy Command."

Saviour? Whenever facing a deep crisis, it is man's will to endure and prevail that crystallizes into a saviour.

WHO SAID PRAYER

Here is a child carrying a loaf of bread. As a crow swoops down, he hides it behind his back. Just then a dog chases the crow away, but itself wants to grab the loaf.

• The word absolute is very close to the word purna in meaning-the word absolute-who convey more fully the sense of the word

The child holds it above his head; but to his utter dismay whizz! pounces a kite to swoop it away. Before the child is himself again, a monkey jumps down from its perch on the wall to see what has attracted so much greed. Aha, the bread! The monkey sets upon him and the child is scared.....

Bending low and holding the bread against his heart, he runs across the courtyard-calling Maa! Maa! Maa!

Now this is the prayer and that is what it implies. God does not need my prayer. It is my desperate need of help that calls out to the Lord to scare away evil and the ignoble thoughts.

There is such a thing like God on trial. We measure Him according to our needs or wishes being fulfilled or not.

GO TO THE TEMPLE

Friend! The temple that you visit is just a room like any other, and an image on the altar only a piece of metal, stone or clay. To ring the temple-bells is but the making of noise and to burn an incense but the creating of blurredness and smoke. But when somebody does it all, in all solemnity, to worship the image of the Lord, then it is a different phenomenon altogether.

The ringing bells echo and re-echo an ardent call given out by a restless seeking heart. The burning incense hopefully scatters all around its fragrant smoke in quest of the Most- sought-after, lest He should be only aware of the animate ones and not of the inanimate too.

In a desperate bid to envision the One and Only, Who is a vision of Bliss, Beauty and Benevolence, the devotee first scans then transcends the walls of the temple high and raises himself into the timeless realms of space (देश), Time (काल) and vastu (वस्तु)* in search of the Infinite Being. A fallacy? Not at all.

• Vastu (सिु) isany really existingor abiding substance oressence, thing, object,article.Also applied to living beings. The real,opposite tothat whichdoes notreally exist.

You play the horse to your son and bottle-feed the doll of your daughter. Because you love them and they belong. Can't the Infinite One, too, play with you a make-believe game of hide and seek by containing Himself in a finite image that your mind sculptures out of its aspirations great? O, dear! God does indeed love you, love us all, despite our dogmatic orthodoxies and narrow beliefs.

Seeker! Look up and hopefully pray-a child of the Infinite Being that you are and dear to Him.

The aspirations of a man in quest of God shall one day blossom forth in faith-both human and divine.

THE TEMPLE HAS A MISSION

Friend! Let us go to the temple.

A temple? A student of science knows that energy is harnessed by mechanical means. A temple is a mechanical device to harness spiritual energy. It is built for this purpose alone. Just as there are light-reflectors, the dome of a temple is a reflector of sound. What a light-reflector is in the case of light, the temple dome is in the case of sound-a sound- reflector it is.

Now, while standing in a temple start reciting a mantra or just chant OM, OM. The sound is not scattered to the winds but is sent back to you by the temple walls and its high dome. As a result thereof the sound resounds. Its echo is there with all its subtleties and mystic thrills. Your response to the thus articulated prayer is more profound, both emotionally and spiritually.

Again-a cupful of water quenches thirst, but tons and tons of it present in the atmosphere as humidity does not. In terms of sadhana the chanting or contemplation of a mantra, in the temple, has a greater potentiality than a heard sermon or discourse. Not that the sermons or the solemn prayers are a waste, they do good and are valuable.

The temple; say a Shiva temple. It is a structure built according to the rules laid down by the ancient scriptures. In the centre of the hall, which is crowned by a dome, is Shiva- linga. On top of the Shiva-linga, placed on a tripod, is a metallic vessel full of water. From a small hole at its bottom the water constantly trickles down on the Shiva-linga. Then there is a bell hanging from the center of the dome. The way the temple is built and all that is therein go to make it a musical instrument of large dimensions.

Now stand facing the Shiva Linga. Fill your heart and the self with a devout fervour and soulful prayers unto the Lord of the universe. Full of vibrant hope that He is going to helpfully respond to your spiritually animated words and emotions-ring the bell*. Ring it time and time again till the temple is full of sound and its vibrations.

Soon the vibrations of the resoundings (dhvani) become so deep and strong that the whole temple begins to vibrate-its dome, its walls, its floor and all. After ringing the bell atop for a while, chant a mantra-only one mantra and not a bookful of them. Why not chant Om, Om? The choice is yours. How about singing a hymn? Better when others join in. Japa or manana of the mantra? You can do that later. For, now it is time for mantra sadhana:

Raise your voice from a liliting whisper to a clamour. Rejoice and celebrate, for the Nowhere Lord is now here. Let the call, the clamour and the volition be full of ardour and devotion. Now lower your voice. Lower it more and more till it is a whisper all over again. Turn your thoughts away from the self that gives rise to them. And solemnly playing upon the musical instrument of large dimensions-that the Shiva

I know it is not possible unless the temple is situated in some remote place where few p around. You can climb the high mountains-the proverbial Himalayas-or climb down into valley of echos-and give out a call to the Distant One. The mountains around and the gre the sky are there to echo and reecho the call to the Most High. I am trying to re-live the days when the call of the lordly mountains was supreme. There is definitely mystic and s the mountains. Experience and know. I did it.

temple is-address the Lord the sadhana way: Recite mantras. Chant Om, Om.

Sing devotional songs and hymns-that will
arouse you spiritually and charge the temple with divine verve. Oh, the intensity of the helpful vibrations and the exuberance of the spiritual stamina thereby released!

A student of Naada Yoga or Shabda Yoga, others too, will find this mode of worship helpful for emotional stability, ecstatic visions, mantra siddhi, Kundalini awakening.

Seeker! To build a temple is to sculpture one's devout intent, ardent aspirations, solemn prayers and divine worship into a dedicated shrine. Build a temple with dome and the temple bells-to give out a vibrating call to the faithful to gather together. Solemnly choose and reverentially instal on its sacred altar a beautiful image of the Lord-inspiring and full of awe. The hymns you sing, the mantras you chant or contemplate, and the mode of worship you adopt and dedicate yourself to-let it all be as the Wise One inside directs or inspires! May God bless you.

Evil dwarfs man and is condemnable. Virtue exalts him to his full human stature and is commendable.

GOD-REALIZATION SO SIMPLE

Friend! For guidance once an aspirant went to Saain InayatKhan,trulyasaintof his time. He bowed low and said: "What should I do forGod-realization?"

At that time the saint, a gardener by profession, wasworkinginthefields.In reply to the pertinent question as it were-he dug out aseedlingfromitsbedand transplanted it in another, and said: "Here! God-realizationissosimpleasthat.'

A great truth indeed! The godman stated it in so candida

बुल्लिा! रब्ब ि ा की पावणा।

एत्थोंपुट्टणाएत्थे,चा लावणा।।

manner. No dogma, no philosophic perplexity-whatisneededistodigoutthe mind from the transient, where it is rooted,andtransplantitinthedivinityof being.

It was Bulleh Shah's moment of destiny thatIhavenarrated.Agreatsainthe made thereafter and his songs inspire us eventoday.

In deference to human dignity God doesnotcommand-Heinspiresmanto higher aspirations and exalted deeds.

WHAT MAKESASAINT

Friend! Let us ponder what is it that makesasaint.Letustrytoknowwhatmakes a man great.

A saint quests for his true identity despitefrustrationsandhardships.While others turn away in dismay, he keeps evennightlongvigilstillthemental horizons are enlightened. Both the saint andagreatman(asman)openupthe way to many a new world of vision and achievement.Theyhavethecourage born of their convictions and their involvementinthingsspiritual,orotherwise noble, is deeper.

Whether a saint or a great man-he is not a merefaceinthecrowd.Asaintisa soul apart and the great man truly a man of imaginationandvision.Whileothers merely talk out-they are in desperate quest of theirrightvocations.Insteadof cavilling or quibbling, they boldly face the challengeofanycrisisanywhere.In their case the choice is deliberate and not a mere reflex.Theyknowwhatthey

are after, and are out to strive assiduously-no wavering, no dilly dallying, a firm but right approach.

Friend! Any sense in going on tuning up the orchestra? High time you started playing. Have an implicit faith in the divine destiny of man and aspire to and strive for becoming truly human. Take heart. The occasions do arise, opportunities to prove yourself will come your way. Strive till the sublimity of character and nobility of outlook become a way of life. How? Pray and meditate and fearlessly do your allotted job.

SAINTS IN TRANSGRESSORS' GARB

Friends are roaming about the world in the garb of strangers. Saints are roaming the solemn waysides in the garb of the sinful, the transgressors. What are we to do?

To the stranger-it is an affectionate call, a welcome nod and a friendly clasp of hand-that goes to make the friend in him step out and shower love, joy and accord. And to the sinful-it is a summon divine, a human smile, and a call for change of heart-that makes the saint in him step out to usher in the Kindly Lord. Mark my words, please. So often the sinner turned a saint leaves a mark sublime not only on his times, but also splashes the glow of his grace on the face of eternity.

I wonder why does Providence make a rose bloom in the midst of thorns that prick and draw blood. Why didn't God make you gracefully accept a thorn in your flesh? If a rose could blossom joyfully in spite of the thorns around, why can't you smile even while facing life's thorny problems?

Friend! Among the thorns Providence made the rose bloom lest an animal in search of food should make a meal of it or tear it apart. Only God can say what purpose sublime He has in mind for the thorny situations to serve.

To meditate is to go on a token strike to draw His attention to the evil ways of the world of man.

RICHES NO BAR

Poverty does not lead to God, nor do riches essentially hurt or hinder. It is neither a privilege of one, nor the bane

of the other. What part the riches play in man's life is the determining factor.

A desperate cry is going round the world against fearful poverty. In the present-day world poverty is a curse and no boon. It breeds crime, it is so often said. Anywhere, anytime, a poor man is a challenge to man and his conscience that pricks.

Not that men have not responded to the call: urged by an urgent sense of responsibility nations are out to raise the poor man's standard of living. A naked person is a living reproach to any man with dignity-human or divine.

Though it rings false, poverty is sometimes glorified from many a golden platform. Time and time again it is said: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." Not that it is not true, but the preachers seldom explain the context. They should.

What makes a rich person blameworthy? A glutton eats, but so do we-while we eat to live, he lives to eat. Something condemnable indeed. So long as man earns to live, and does not lose sight of the decent values of life-it is all right. It's not right however to live for earning alone-no sense of propriety, nor any sense of proportions.

Friend! Help a greedy person to become a man of charitable disposition. That is the human way to rehabilitate him morally and spiritually. No sense in destroying man's initiative and dampening his spirit of adventure, he should instead be encouraged to work harder and earn more. Inspire him to help the less fortunate in any manner he can.

Seeker! It is human to help and be helped. None can ever be entirely on one's own. With a full sense of responsibility accept help whenever needed. Only readily help others if need be-no grumbling whatever.

Friend! All of us belong to the family of man-more so in view of the shrinking frontiers. This sense of belonging is conducive to our mental, moral, emotional and spiritual growth. Time we gave up derogatory words like charity, alms, tithe, daan etc. Let us instead use remarks like sharing, sense of responsibility, brotherhood of man etc. Human dignity, divinity of man and the sense of belonging to the Lord are worth aspiring after.

"The fundamental paradox of our time, namely the co- existence of poverty and plenty in a bountiful world."

SHARING IS RENUNCIATION

Aspirant! Feeling for one's fellow beings is greater at the time of common danger or while facing some natural calamity. Providence takes its cue from life and turns itself into a misfortune to bring a selfish person back to the human fold.

When assailed by difficulties, a selfish person starts thinking in terms of social justice and brotherhood of man. Providence triumphs and man learns his lesson, though the hard way.

Seeker! Learn to love your neighbour and learn to share. Not to share is greed, a sinful thought, an unmanlike deed. Sharing gracefully what you can with the less fortunate is renunciation, a higher value of life that gives peace, power and plenty.

Not Providence but man's inordinate desire to possess mutilates human destiny and makes men suffer.

ANCIENT INDIAN THOUGHT

ग्रपूज्ि त्र पूज्न्ते ेपूज्निा ुंव व्यितक्रमः।

त्रीखण तत्र प्रवतन्यते ्ुसुभक्षय ुंमरण ुंभिम् ्॥

Where the undeserving are honoured and a man worthy tolead is elbowed out and slighted-there will prevail unrest, fear, woe, and scarcity.

(Ancient Indian thought)

Aspirant! You may be great in any field-physical, mental, moral, spiritual or political. Many people might look up to you for right direction. For that you need greater forbearance and a strong sense of what is right and what is wrong. You must be capable of deeper compassion and must have a sense of justice and fair play-not narrow-minded but large-hearted and forgiving. By your actions and your behaviour you can do better-instead of wordy duels. So take care.

The greater the man, the greater the mistakes he commits, it is generally said. A man in the street involves not very many, and the damage done by his misbehaviour is not so hurting. In the present day world, the tools of destruction are many. It is all the more imperative that better sense should prevail with great men and their advisers.

So-choose your leaders in religion, thought and action with great care. Let them have a greater sense of responsibility and not be given to frivolities in any field that is going to affect common people.

Be a helpful ally and not a sinister rival in the service of man and God.

WHY SHOULD GOOD PEOPLE SUFFER

Aspirant! If a bad person suffers, it is all right-I can understand. But why should the good people suffer? Something wrong with the Law of Karma? That is what once bothered a friend and here is what I wrote in good faith, in the light of his personal problems. It was a case of misplacing one's trust and that of misplaced generosity:

Dear friend,

Every kinship or human relationship has its own privileges and obligations. Once man accepts a certain relationship, it is the law of life (the Law of Karma?) that he should simultaneously accept both the privileges and the obligations. So many ills of life are due to accepting one alone and not the other too.

A privilege and an obligation that a particular relationship involves are complementary. They complement each other and make the relationship truly wholesome. Hence man should neither hasten to take advantage of the privileges offered, nor should he hesitate to fulfil his obligations that a relationship rightly devolves upon him. He should instead welcome them both and lead a balanced wholesome life. A difficult task but there is no other go.

Without commenting in any manner on your personal life, I may add: In a spirit of generosity-either worked up or rising from some compulsion-if a good person accepts only the obligations and not the privileges alongside, he is not doing the right thing. Because of this lapse on his part, if he does really suffer he should not say it with a proud wave of his hand that the good people always suffer for no fault of theirs. He should instead realize his mistake of not observing the law governing human relationships.

If a selfish person tries to grab the privileges only and not the obligations too, he is at fault. When in distress he should not curse his fate nor blame Providence, but should instead blame himself.

Sincerely,

Nath

P.S. So long as life is what it is, "thou" and "I", "thine" and "mine" shall always be there-we may clothe them as we like. Let them be; but we should gracefully accept both the privileges and the obligations of a human relationship. If my selfishness (veiled or otherwise) accepts both the privileges and the obligations, you should not condemn me outright. If your generosity, on the other hand, accepts the obligations alone or the privileges only-it is against the Law of Karma and not right.

CONSCIENCE: GOD'S WORD OF CAUTION

To me man's conscience is a sense like any other-sense of smell, touch, taste etc.... But it does not seem to have an organ of its own to function through. Being yet in the making, some day man might as well beget himself a proper organ. The very much needed human organ might already be in the making, who knows?

How about conscience being a higher human consciousness? The idea is good, only if it were true. To the best of our knowledge the human consciousness has no voice of its own to express itself. Man's conscience, on the other hand, knows when and what to say and that, too, in the language of the person concerned.

Conscience at work is a unique phenomenon and a great human experience. It is man's sense of responsibility and a collective urge felt by the enlightened human unconscious that finds a voice in man's breast. The anatomy of the conscience is however yet to be correctly spelt out. Is it a sentinel of God? God need not police the mind's frontiers because He is the mind. Is it the voice of God? Not in the sense you would like me to believe.

Maybe, the human conscience is an inherent faculty of man that speaks responsibly. On my part, I would, any day, prefer human stuff to go into its making. Action taken at its behest will then undeniably be my responsibility. Though pride and prejudice sometimes masquerade as conscience, the call of the conscience is unique. Its breathless spontaneity, solemnity and clarity mark it out.

Friend! To my mind, whether practised consciously or unconsciously, both Hri and Mati, the two niyamas of the Eightfold Path of Yoga, either go into the making of the human conscience or are its important dimensions. Whatever is-here is what Hri and Mati are: Hri cautions man to act rightly lest he should have to suffer. Mati counsels him to take the right initiative at the right moment.

Taken together this is exactly what conscience stands for. It cautions, it warns. It as well counsels man to act manlike.

Again-possibly at some higher level of consciousness man is very close to the Lord. But being yet in the making, he is likely to err in spite of the best of intentions. Now, since mistakes at that level would attract rather harsh punishment, the Benevolent One chooses to caution man. This Word of Caution expresses Itself as the voice of the human conscience.

Seeker! Practise yoga to be in consonance with the dictates of your conscience. Practise yoga to have the right awareness, the right attitude, the right approach. Practise yoga to create a healthy climate for your conscience and its two dimensions- Hri and Mati-to grow to their full human stature. Till such time as a right initiative and the right intent become your way of life-be guided by your conscience which is already on its way to grow into God's Will. The human spirit and the divinity of man want it so.

Karma is man's natural response to the call given out by life.

IV-NOW OM! THE SACRED SYLLABLE

NOW OM, THE PRANAVA

Now OM, the Pranava. It is written like this: ओ३म Its symbol is . ॐ

Patanjali says: "तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः ॥"

"OM, ओ३म is the true expression of the Lord."

Manduka Upanishad proclaims : "ओ३म इयत एतत् ्अक्षरम् ्॥"

OM, is the Ultimate Truth, the Imperishable!

Vidyaranya Muni says:

बुश्ध्तिानवें घ्ीिषशून्ेनि कान्तवाससना । ीघं ंप्रणवमुच्चि यमनोराज्ु ंप्रवजीते े।।

(4.62 Pancha Dashi)

तत्त्वज्ञानी साधक बुद्धध के ोषों को ूरू करके एकान्त स्थान में बैठकर बहुत लभबा ओ३म् ्उच्चारण करके मन को बस में कर लेता है ।

"While sitting in a secluded place with a purified mind, a seeker gets control over his mind by a dirgha (prolonged*, ीघा)य recitation of OM!"

In the Gita (VIII-11, 12, 13) Lord Krishna says: "Now I will give a brief exposition of Parma-pada-the ultimate of human aspirations. This Parma-pada is called Omkara (ata) by the learned and in It the aspirations of the true seekers find their fulfilment; and It is the ultimate goal of those who bring their minds under control and sublimate their sense- urges.

"After having sublimated the sense-urges, (after having) fixed the mind on Anahata Chakra, and (after having) firmly established his Prana (chitta) in the region of Ajna Chakra, the yogi attains the highest goal, if he, even while in the throes of the crisis of death, goes on solemnly reciting OM! OM! till he breathes his last."

Let us study OM! about which so much has been said.

Just as mantra is a yantra (ंत्रि) , OM! is also a vantra.

The word prolonged does not convey the sense of the word dirgha fully. The recitation should be for a long period and the sound of it should be deep-of low pitch but profound, intensely felt. It should resound. The vowel O (a) should be lengthened to 3 matras.

The word OM is made up of two parts: "O" (ओ) and "M" (म). "O" is a vowel* and "M" is a vowelized consonant. Because of it the sounds of both "O" (ओ) and "M" (म) can be prolonged to any length.

Now "O" (ओ), the vowel portion of the Pranava, is a combination of "A" (आ) and "U" (उ). Hence, while pronouncing "O" (ओ), it should be kept in mind that it is so. To have the desired sound "O" (ओ), after proper integration of the sounds of "A" (आ) and "U" (उ), it is essential that the throat and the lips should open up and part in such a manner as to allow the air, coming from the region of the heart, a free passage through the vocal chords. The sound "O" (ओ) is to be vivrita** (प्रववृत्) and not samvrita*** (सवुंत्).

Again, the uchcharana (उच्चरान, recitation) of 'O' (ओ) should be pluta (प्लुत)**** ; and, likewise, the recitation of 'M' (म) , the last half of the word OM

should also be prolonged and should resound and the voice should be allowed to trail off gradually. The whole process of chanting is one continuous vibrant dhvani (ध्वयन, sound, echo, voice) of OM!

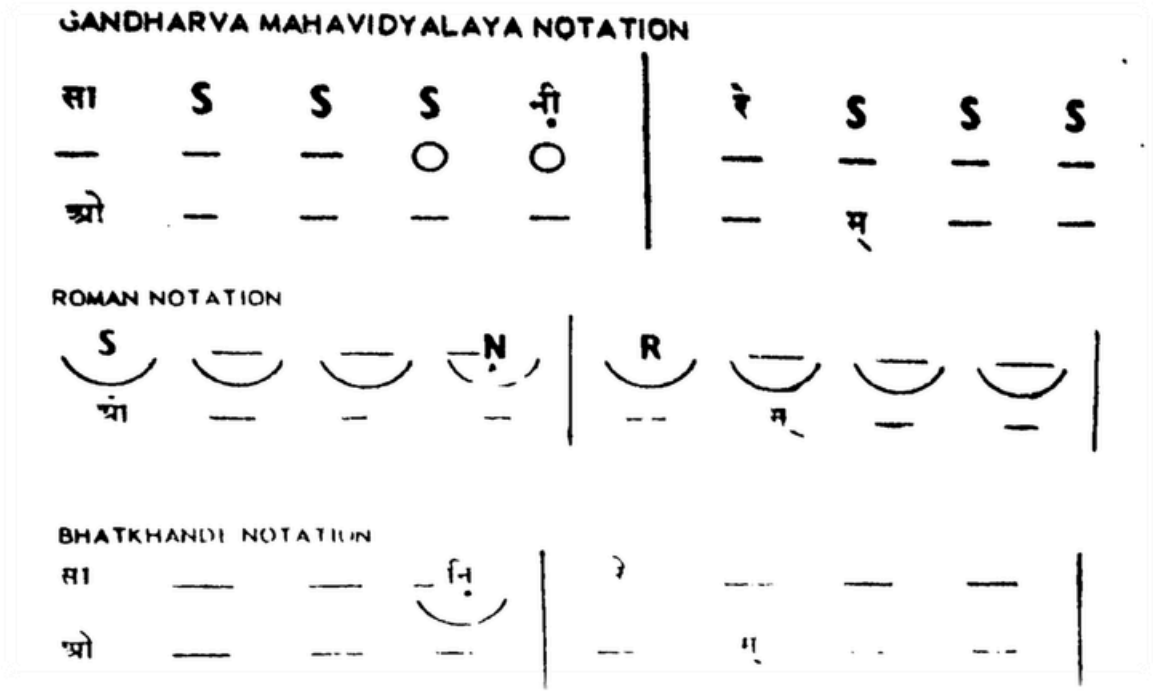
Only a practical demonstration can help you to understand the proper method of reciting OM! OM! It is not difficult however. Even the dumb can do it by and by. Learn it and do it. When you chant continuously and in quick succession, it will be something like 'Ong'! 'Ong' and not OM! OM! The sound of 'G' in it will be nasal.

* The sound of a vowel can be prolonged to any length but the sound of the consonant is kshanadhwansi (क्षणाध्वंसी)-short-lived.

** Open-mouthed, unchecked articulation; approach of the tongue towards the organ of s without contact.

*** Contracted, compressed, closed (as the throat); articulated with the vocal chords cont

**** Protracted, prolated or lengthened (as a vowel) to 3 matras.



Make a start in any manner you like. As you follow the Path with reverence and devotion to the Lord, the Pranava chanting will improve by and by and become perfect (शुद्ध) one day.

Friend! With a devout heart, sit down in an asana convenient to you and recite OM! OM! It is a profound sadhana in its own right.

Can you do it? Here is another way of doing it:

Give out a call to Maa, the Mother Divine. O Maa. Another call: O Maa. Another call: O Maa. O Maa. Still another one: O Maa, and go on calling: O Maa; O Maa; O Maa; O Maa; O Maa; O Maa; O,M; OM; OM, OM! OM! OM! Ong! Ong! Ong!

Put your heart and soul in it and go on chanting the sacred word OM (3)-THE WORD-THE PRANAVA.

PRANAVA AS SADHANA

Let us sit down in a temple and recite OM, OM-the way I have explained.

As you chant and chant and chant-your whole being begins to move, rhythmically and steadily, to and fro as a pendulum. The vibrations increase in intensity and charge the very atmosphere around. You may or may not feel it, but the charged atmosphere, in its turn, does throw you in a state of vibration.

As the chanting goes on-even the chakras* (चक्र) begin to vibrate and because of that the body begins to move to and fro, sideways too. The hands begin to flutter and there is a violent movement of the arms too. Sometimes you throw them out in wild abandon. Oh, the vehemence of it.

Believe it or not, but it is true. As the chanting goes on- not only the very earth beneath you begins to vibrate but, at one time or another, the temple walls also are in a state of vibration-and many a gust of wind then sweeps across your face as if you were sitting out in the open and not inside the temple.

Sometimes one bandha (one of the yogic practices) or an- other is automatically performed. That is so in the case of mudras and Pranayama too. In this sadhana, Pranayama, mudras and the bandhas come off naturally. To practise them separately and not as an integral part of sadhana rather hinders spiritual progress. That is like helping a bud to blossom forth with one's own fingers.

Sometimes, after chanting OM! OM! for a while, you go in- to ecstasy. Being overwhelmed by it, you start crying. Some- times you weep and laugh near simultaneously. At other times, you sing devotional songs and hymns, or recite mantras and know it not.

*Psychiccenters. To understandtheirtruesignificanceitisbettertoread,say,"TheSerpentPower", or any other book on Yoga.

At long last the asana rights itself and you sit in a proper posture. The breathing is then rhythmic, regular and light, and you are at peace and in command of your self. Meditation comes by naturally and the mind is brought under control in the process. That makes it possible for you to sit in Dhyana without much discomfort.

Now the stage is set for Kundalini awakening. You can even 'sense' it. There are flashes of light and you see visions in bluish white light. Things miraculous begin to happen and you are blessed with intuition (अनुभव) that reveals many things -both mundane and spiritual.

Kundalini, while in the process of awakening, brings about a change in the state of your consciousness. Your awareness of the unconscious is greater. You are then as if on the wings. You smile and are full of joy and you bring joy into other people's lives. Bliss oozes out of your every pore. The hair stand on end whenever God's name is mentioned. Concentra- tion, for that matter even the state of Samadhi also, come off naturally. You are hardly aware of it however. A significant change is in the offing that is going to alter the very way of your life beyond recognition. The higher values of life, love of God and a deep faith in Him will then become the very breath of your life.

HOW I LEARNT PRANAVA SADHANA

One day, in February 1936, a friend came and said: "Show me the way."

I did not know what to do or what to say. It was all new to me. Only a few weeks ago, I was myself in quest of it.
Presently I heard myself say: "Sit down."

He sat down in a meditative pose. I, too, got down from the chair and sat down on the floor.

"Close your eyes."

My friend closed his eyes. So did I.

As I sat wondering as to what should be the next step, he began: "What am I to do? Which is the point that I shall concentrate on? Shall I concentrate on Ajna Chakra?"

Though I had no idea about the Chakras in those good old days, I found myself saying: "You are not to concentrate on any point. You are not to do anything, nor make any effort. Just sit quietly and leave it at that. How and when and where God chooses to reveal Himself-leave it at that or leave it to the Lord."

Suddenly my friend touched me. I opened my eyes. The smile which he wore showed that there was something wrong somewhere. Either what I said was not correct or it was contrary to what he knew or believed.

The aspirant was an old man. I was young. I did not stop however, and kept up: "Keep sitting. No movement permitted. Behave when praying. Sadhana means that. Now close your eyes and sit steadily."

I also closed my eyes, took in a long breath and fell back- quiet but strangely tense. tense. As I straightened myself, my shoulders got a jerk. The next moment my mouth became dry. Why? No idea.

A strange thing then happened! An invisible hand began to move up and down my spine and an indescribable quietude descended upon my inside. Deep inside silence prevailed and it began to hum. My whole being was taken in by the joyous rhythm of it.

Within seconds, I heard myself chanting OM! OM! The way it was, it was for the first time. Oh, the thrill and the trill of my voice. The vibrations were in the very air. They shook me, shook my whole being. All along the chanting continued! Down my spine, water flowed in small streams. I perspired so hard. An urge! And I touched the man on the forehead-in between the two eyebrows. (Was he not so very particular about the Ajna Chakra?) Again I touched-not the forehead this time but his arm.

Presently I became conscious of another voice. I felt like and I was quiet. Now it was my friend who, with all his might, was chanting OM! OM!

Quietly did I sit-just conscious of the chant. After a while, I opened my eyes and saw the aspirant sitting undisturbed, as if not bothered at all by the water trickling down his face. Strange indeed.

In spite of myself, I took in a deep breath--and once again began to chant OM! OM!

It was after more than an hour that I felt like quietening down.

"Silence!"

This was a word of command that rang out within me and outside. And I was quiet.

Both of us now sat in silence.

Dazed, I prayed: "Help me. Help him, my Almighty, All-knowing Lord!"

To utter the words neither my lips parted, nor the tongue moved. But I was praying like that in so many words.

After a while, I opened my eyes and saw the aspirant ni- ling affably. His wrinkled face was aglow and serene.

"How do you feel?"

In reply to my query, he said gently: "I wish I could tell you that. "Did you at one time recite OM! OM?" "Yes, I also chanted OM, OM. But I don't know how it all came about." I had nothing to say in reply to what he said. A new experience for me too. Before I could say anything, he kept up: "At first I thought you knew nothing
about the Way, but your chanting made all the difference. I had to change my view. Your voice filled me with awe and I felt like being awesomely shaken." I didn't say a word and he continued: "Though you did the chanting, I felt as if I was doing it." Suddenly I felt like being asked to ready myself for the sadhana. Shaken badly by now by the vibrations though, I felt calm and serene. Tears were trickling down my face, and I was perspiring. Imagine this happening in the cold month of February...." "Cover yourself, lest you should catch cold," I said and looked around.... However unmindful of what I suggested, the aspirant continued: "While I sat
struggling against the force of the vibrations, something strange was happening to me. One moment I was quiet, the very next moment I was reciting OM! OM!- with a breathless spontaneity. Believe me, the chanting started in spite of me, and it went on despite my effort to stop it."

"It sounds so strange."

"It does. You should have known it. Anyway-as the chanting continued, my hands began to move and make signs."

"The signs?"

"Yes, they were mudras."

"How do you know?"

"I have been reading about them, but today I have experienced them for the first time. At one time, I remember, as I threw my arms out in wild abandon, a prayer woke up in me to say: I seek Thee, Thy grace. Mercy! Oh, the Benevolent Almighty."

As he said it all in so many words, his whole body quivered with ecstasy. Tears rolled down his cheeks and he continued: "For me it has really been a strange new experience. At first I thought I was merely breathing hard. Soon I realized,

however, that it was Pranayama. Like the mudras, Pranayama, too, came off naturally--without my striving for it."

"Some other day I will explain how the yoga way of life is the most natural way to God-realization...."

He cut me short and continued: "The chanting went on. I tried but could not stop it. One thing struck me as strange however that my voice did not sound like my own."

I listened and he sat telling me what he had experienced. He was so very full of it.

Friend! That is how I learnt, nay, that is how I was taught to chant the Word That was, That is and That will be. Since that day, I have recited it on hilltops, from housetops and in vales and dales....

That has been and is my only sadhana. No other.

We sit together in small groups and one of us does the chanting. We call this mode of sadhana, a sitting. We sit with an open mind and leave it to Him to appear as and when and where He chooses. Hard for me however to explain that whenever I sit alone I cannot do the chanting. It comes off only when others are there. For years it has been so.

According to some scholars it is Nada Yoga. Others tell me that it is Kundalini sadhana. "The way the whole body begins to vibrate indicates it." Still others whisper with a twinkle in their eyes: "Oh! It is Shakti Paat (शश्क्तपात), the secret path of initiation."

But I make no secret of it. Whatever it is, it is there. Assess, experience and understand.

Revelations? They come blessed by the Lord, untouched by the mind, straight from an enlightened heart.

KRISHNA LEELA-KUNDALINI

AWAKENING

There is something strange, divine and godlike about the lives of the great ones-sages, prophets and the avataras. Whatever they say turns out to be true. In our ignorance we call it a prophecy or a miracle.

Sometimes, an ordinary action of theirs is of universal relevance and has in it an element that exalts-elevates morally and spiritually. During their sojourn on earth many a miraculous thing happens that serves as a beacon to humanity which would otherwise be groping in the dark.

Here is an episode from the life of Lord Krishna, the Saviour. While still very young, He brought under control Kaliya, the serpent king. In a simple everyday language it is the story of a seeker who took upon himself to awaken Kundalini-the mystic serpent power.

One day, Lord Krishna and His playmates were playing on the bank of the river Yamuna. One hard hit by the Playful One to the ball that they were playing with, sent it spinning into a whirling eddy. While others stood dismayed, the Great One jumped into the river to retrieve the ball from the whirlpool.

"Save Him! Save the Flute Player," went out the cry. Gopis (the milkmaids), gowalas (the cowboys), mother Yashoda, and Radha, the One and Only, rushed bewailing to the scene of the tragedy. The terror-stricken companions pointed at the swirling waters and broke down with grief. Nanda Baba came and offered all his wealth to whoever would save the Child.

While everybody bemoaned and rushed about bewildered along the river bank above-down below Krishna went straight to Kaliya's abode and rapped out: "Wake up*!"

The rap, and the seven serpent queens rushed to the palace gate and whispered: "Hush! The serpent king sleeps inside."

"We have been awakened but thank Your stars, his slumbers are not so light. Go, sweet little Child! Run back to Your play before it is too late," added another.

Krishna smiled and shook His head as still another queen threatened: "Aren't You afraid of death, Child? Has an unkind mother sent You out of the house to die an untimely death?"

The Playful One gave her a smile and said: "Right you are! Yashoda Maa does need Kaliya as a cord for her churning rod."

Inside, the serpent king felt restless in his sleep.

While the Holy Child stood unperturbed, the serpent queens felt overawed.

"Pray go back. Here take these flashing little things to wear, and go," they implored.

Unmindful of the pleadings and the lure, Krishna stepped forward as they continued: "Tied around Your ankles the silver bells would chime sweet; and on Your forehead would shine the diamond crescent."

The queens looked on helplessly and Kaliya wriggled nervously as Krishna's voice thundered across the seven chambers: "Wake up! I await."

According to the legend, Bal (Child, ara) Krishna brought under control Kaliya, the serpent king, who lived on the bed of the river Yamuna and was a terror to the cowboys and their cattle.

This legend has a special significance for me. It reminds me of my childhood.

My revered mother
then used to narrate this episode in a beautiful song.
Later-so many times Bal Krishna dancing on Kaliya's head used to appear

before my mind's eye. This
vision has always been allegorically associated with Kundalini awakening.
A fit subject for a student of yoga to ponder over and elaborate.

The Enlightened One stepped forward! Suddenly a loud reverberating sound

shook the very foundations of the king's
chambers. Stricken with fear the queens fell back leaving the door ajar. Not yet fully awake, the serpent king raised his head a little and hissed in all ferociousness. Krishna staggered for a while but was soon on His feet again. All set, determined, He moved forward! Anguished, the serpent queens gave out a

cry of despair. Kaliya opened his
drowsy eyes a little and hissed again. The hiss struck Krishna full in the face and lo! the white complexion of the Beautiful One turned sky blue (, श्यामा shyama).

A loud reverberating voice then thundered through the serenity of time and space, followed soon after by the dazzle of a thousand suns. The awe-struck serpent queens went down on their knees, and began to sing in praise of the Playful One. Kaliya, the seven-headed serpent, was now wide awake and it readily recognised the Master of the three worlds (lokas) and the seven heavens.

Bal Krishna jumped from one head of the serpent to an- other on to the seventh one, and began to dance on it and play upon His flute....
Thus it was that the Eternal Lover rose to the surface of the river-in full control of Kaliya, the serpent king!

Friend! Krishna is the Master, the Yogiraj. The Playful One's play on the river bank denotes our day to day life and its routine. The insignificant little ball that He sent spinning into the whirlpool is the earnest wish to quest.

For a man of the world the quest for the Ultimate Truth is not of much significance, but not for a yogi. Inspired by the sense of destiny he takes to the path of self-realization and is fully absorbed in it.

The whirlpool, wherein the ball vanished after being caught in it, is yoga sadhana-meaningful Titiksha and purposeful devotion. It is to commit oneself to strive for self-fulfilment.

Leaving the safety of the known, the yogi takes to another way of life about which he knows so little.

Sadhana takes the aspirant to the world of the unconscious, the region of the Muladhara Chakra at the base of the spinal cord, where the dormant Kundalini resides. The seven serpent queens are the seven yoga vibhutis, which derive their shakti (power, शश्क्त) from the seven Chakras-Muladhara, Svadhish-thana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha, Ajna and Sahasrara.

Whenever man takes to yoga sadhana, the dormant Kunda- lini becomes restless. As the sadhana goes on, it begins to show signs of waking up. This restlessness is reflected in the mind of the seeker, and he, too, becomes restless and unquiet. As he continues, the aspirant starts showing signs of being a spiritually awakened person and is a sage in the making.

Again-to start with, it is the yoga vibhutis that are 'aroused' by Kundalini Sadhana. And the word that the Master (of the unconscious) has arrived, thunders across the seven planes of human consciousness.* The reverberations are too strong to be ignored by anyone and challenge attention.

These mystic reverberations shake the man out of a state of apathy and inactivity, and he becomes aware of his dormant talents and is alive to the budding higher truths of life wherefrom flow supreme powers-the miraculous yoga vibhutis. It is a wonderous and an awesome experience that changes the very nature of every day human existence.

Now is the time when all sorts of obstacles come in the way of a seeker. He is in for one trial or another. That must not deter him however. Calm and serene, but determined and smiling, he must, despite trials and tribulations, go on following the spiritual path and doing sadhana. Any lapse at this stage is full of hazards.

The fall is disastrous, but the maturing experience of the ordeals brings him ecstasy and glory. ..

At this stage the seeker needs be careful. For, he is likely to be lured away from the path by one temptation or another. The temptations offer riches, glamour and sensuous pleasures. Siddhis, the mystic supernatural powers, make him irresistible and an object of attraction and adoration: That is what spells danger to his newfound identity and he must not give in but stand apart and high. He should go on following the path of God-realization, taking both the praise and the abuses in his stride till wisdom divine (viveka) dawns upon him and he is a

* The seven planes of consciousness correspond to the seven Chakras-Muladhara, Svadhishthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha, Ajna and Sahasrara, and to the seven yoga vibhutis.

jnani (ज्ञानी). No, should a student of Kundalini-yoga take fright when he sees some strange
lights or hears mystic voices. The light that he sees is often mellow but sometimes it dazzles. The sounds that he hears are often pleasant and ring like silver bells in his ears, but, sometimes, they thunder through both the conscious and the unconscious of the yoga student.

Sometimes, the aspirant hears words being spoken with a breathless spontaneity. In every day language he would say: "I heard the voice of silence. The word of God came to me. God spoke and I heard Him."

So often he finds himself in a world of divine silence hum- ming with a strangely sweet melody....

Last! A word of caution, dear aspirant: While doing yoga sadhana, do not anticipate any spiritual experience that you might have heard of. It is a natural process and should not be interfered with. A world of make-believe? No, not for you.

Fascinating indeed is the world of man and his symbols, and it inspires awe. The sages explain a little but leave the most of it unexplained-to be experienced and understood by the seekers themselves.

Meditation brings into play the higher forces of life that help men on their way to self-realization.

THE SYMBOLIC WORLD OF RELIGION

The symbolic world of religion has its own charm and has a great hold on man's mind. It is a beautiful poem that fascinates, also mystifies. Though a paradox, it is true that a symbol does sometimes stir a deeper faith in man's heart than the Reality Itself.

Behold! Here is Kaali Maa. She is dancing on the prostrate figure of Shava.* What does that signify?
Anything subject to change or transformation. Literally speaking, Shava is a corpse, a dead body.
Does something stir within? Do you feel as if entranced? Now and then does divine quietude descend upon your rather restless heart? Seeker! It is the CALL. (The call is eternal and is for all-though only the pure in heart understand it.)

Friend! Maa is calling. Maa claims you. She hungers to gather you in Her arms (of faith and love).
But Who is Maa? She is the first life-giving principle of prakriti*-nature. And the rhythmic movement of Her dance makes the inert Shava come to life as a living phenomenon. It is not a touch and go affair-it abides with it..

The dance of Kaali Maa goes on-it never ceases.

The miraculous touch of Maa's dancing feet, and Shava begins to show signs of life. Now it is conscious of its existence, and is animated with a new awareness and is restless.** Restlessness is inherent in prakriti-is its essential character that bridges the gulf between the inanimate and the animate.
The eternal dance of Kaali Maa goes on and on. Behold! Shava lives! It has started wriggling ever so little. It is sentient, and is aware of Maa's miraculous touch. It grows.

As if to feel and to be conscious were not enough, Shava now wants to see whoever gave it life. Intensely aware of the need of it, it starts growing eyes.

The eternal dance of Kaali Maa goes on unabated.

Maa smiles, nods approval; is satisfied. The prostrate figure of Shava wriggles out from under Her feet and heaves the first sigh of relief-Ananda. Kaali Maa, the miraculous life-giving principle of nature (prakriti), dances sublime.

The eternal dance of Kaali Maa goes on.

* ~~Sometimes it becomes difficult to interpret a word of one language~~ in ~~another. Normally prakriti is nature. But it also means svabhava (F), essen~~tial character, nature-something natural to anything or

anyone e.g., human nature. Water finds its level-that is water's prakriti, its svabhava; its quality; its property; its essential character.

** Never quiet or still, always active or inclined to action-seeking change.

Shava when inanimate is inert-when animated it is restless! The Ultimate of all inert matter is prakriti, the restless. And the ultimate of the restless prakriti is protoplasm. (Protoplasm is a typically translucent, colourless, semifluid, complex substance regarded as the physical basis of life, having the ability to sense and conduct stimuli and to metabolize. It is the living matter of all cells and tissues.)

As the dance gains momentum, Maa is thrown into a state of ecstasy and She exclaims joyfully. Shava fumbles awkwardly. Too much as yet for it to sense what Maa wants to express.

The eternal dance of Kaali Maa goes on and on.

Maa bends over, mumbles something or another. Shava pricks up its as yet unformed ears. Maa's dancing feet thump all the more vigorously....

The eternal dance of Kaali Maa goes on in a state of wild abandon.

Struck with fear, Shava shrinks back as an Unseen Hand shoves it on to Rudra*- the howler, the terrific roarer.

Come and see Rudra, the howler, work on what is being shoved on to Him. What has been shoved on to Him is as yet raw and unfinished but is restlessly aware of the newfound existence-Sat (सत).

There! Lo, Rudra, the master of the disintegrating and re-integrating forces, has started dancing sublimely. Behold! Shava is rising supreme-having been blessed by Him with the manas-tattva-the mind-to companion the ten vital breaths of life....

The dance divine of Kaali Maa goes on.

Blessed by Rudra and now live and alive with the fire of life (Sat,सत), Shava looks around, observes, tries to learn, understand and to comprehend. By applying its newfound mind it cognizes, reflects, reasons out and deliberates- and lo! inspired by an unknown urge, Shava splits itself in two-male and female. The first ever great accomplishment of Shava!

Brahma, the Master of the forces of creation, is athrob and a voiceless song of life, love and the Lord bursts forth--miraculously sweet and joyous, full-of-zest

and satisfying. Shava is caught in by its creative melody and is pleasantly aware of another dimension being added to it. Ananda** it is.

* According to the Vedas, Rudras are many-that is to say, Rudra has many gunas (attributes): i.e., Rudra has many functions to perform.

In the present context, Rudra is primarily the disintegrating and re-integrating principle of life. As such it is Mahadeva. (Mahadeva is another name for Lord Shiva.)

**Ananda rises from the fulfilment not only of man's wants but also of his expectations, aspirations as well. Ultimately it is the sense of self- realization itself.

The eternally restless dance of Kaali Maa goes on. The dance eternal of Kaali Maa goes on, bridging the gulf between the inanimate and the animate and the Creation is on the go.

The eternal dance of Kaali Maa goes on.

The Unseen Hand goes on shoving ceaselessly the thus spanned inanimate and the animate on to Rudra-the vital principle of prakriti, the restless, that disintegrates and reintegrates endlessly.

The dance eternal goes on as Maa smiles and Shava is astounded to see Rudra, the destroyer, turn a Saviour. What Rudra disintegrates, Mahadeva, the Saviour, re-integrates. The breathless spontaneity of it is miraculous and Shava seems to be plagued with perplexities....

Friend! What is it all about? Though from macrocosm to microcosm is a far cry, let us figure it out briefly-in terms of yoga and sadhana.

At a certain stage of sadhana, a strange fear grips the seeker's mind and he is in a state of awesome vibration. Unquiet and restless, he is often seized with a wanderlust. The urge to travel about takes him to many places-sacred or otherwise. He wants to span the eternity of dvandvas (द्विंवास)- the pairs of opposites - or whatever is that lies beyond. Like a stone in the mountain torrent, prakriti keeps the aspirant rolling down the running streams of life and many an angularity of his is rounded off in the process. If his aspiration is sandstone, it crumbles and is sand. You can see many a man-seeker or not-trying to make ropes of sand and wasting time.

As the divine dance of Kaali Maa goes on, one yoga vibhuti or another, one spiritual splendour or another, makes the seeker more and more aware of his ultimate destiny divine.

Then-Kaali Maa is said to devour Kaala (काल, Time), the fourth dimension of the three dimensional universe! That is to say a seeker is lost in meditation and is not aware of the passing time.

That was at the physical level. On the spiritual plane, the seeker begins to quest for the Immutable. As he goes on, he feels inspired to transcend the human limitations and to step out of his limited-self to embrace a larger and a higher self. A man on his way to discover his true identity, he is now on the path of God-realization-the ultimate of human aspirations.

As he progresses on the spiritual path, all the hapless notions about Kaali Maa crystallize themselves into one single proposition that Kaali Maa is the Ultimate Absolute.

Revelations? Something from the great beyond straggles into man's consciousness. Unfamiliar surroundings startle it into revelations.

THE WORLD OF SYMBOLS AGAIN

Today again I will talk about the symbolic world of religion and faith.

Whenever I fail to express something clearly, I turn to symbols and signs. I visualise even the Unknown Ultimate in terms of the known by putting It into a symbolical proposition. A proper symbol reveals the Unfathomable Ultimate adequately to my mind.
Here is a temple and in it there is the Shiva-linga.

Now Shiva-linga is Shiva+linga. Shiva is God Almighty. (That is the name I have given to the Ultimate Absolute.) Linga is a Sanskrit word and it means: sign (सकुेत), a symbol. So Shiva-linga is a symbol, an emblem, of the Infinite One.

Let me say it again: Just as I express infinity in terms of a mathematical sign ∞, similarly I try to express the Infinite One in terms of a sculptured mathematical expression, the Shivalinga. What I could not comprehend otherwise, a mathematical sign-linga- makes it easier for me to understand.
Again, the symbolic world of religion has a purpose and a value. It gives me a good start on the Path of God-realization. The different symbols express this

Supreme Being in different ways. They help me to understand the Ultimate Reality better.

Now, to pour down as rain the clouds need insignificant little dust particles to cling to. Any student of science will explain that to you. Maybe, my aspirations also need the symbolic world of religion to express themselves into religious propositions more realistically.

Friend! According to the legend, a pearl oyster takes in a raindrop on an auspicious occasion (during the Swati Nakshatra period) and closes its 'mouth'. It then holds the drop of water to its bosom till it turns into a pearl of rare beauty. All the while it waits, and waits with bated breath- keeping its mouth shut.

On an auspicious occasion of His grace and mercy, you should also aspire to talk to Him and, in all solemnity, hold this aspiration in Dharana and Dhyana. A day will come when your sublime wish will find its fulfilment in the Ultimate. Till then practise Pranayama and Pratyahara with single-minded devotion and be always mindful of the Truth Absolute.

Sometimes I wonder: maybe life is the nucleus around which the Lord of the Creation has chosen to create the grand edifice of man and his universe. Maybe man's yearning prayer is needed by the Benevolent One to descend into his life as love divine. Maybe, like the presence of the floating dust particles* in the atmosphere, which make it possible for the clouds in the sky to fall as raindrops, man's baser nature is necessary for the descent of God into his consciousness as an awareness sublime. Otherwise, how could evil ever exist in man's heart and in the Lord's universe?

NOT SYMBOL BUT WHAT IT SYMBOLIZES

A friend once came and began: "Look at these sadhus going about donning the robes. I wonder if any one of them is a realized soul."

* It is said that there can't be any rainfall if there were no dust particles floating in the atm

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In vain I pleaded: "What matters is not the symbol but what it symbolizes. A symbol is valuable because of the substance behind it. Whatever is, let us show respect to men in robes. Black sheep are always there in every flock..."

He cut me short and began: "Look at men trying to find God in places of worship built of mortar and bricks and in images made of stone."

Before he could ramble on, I cut in: "Be it a temple, the image in it, or the lamps lit in front of that-it symbolizes eternal quest for the Ultimate. As such both the symbol and the substance behind it complement each other.

"Once we accept a symbol to represent the reality behind it, our approach to it is then activated by emotion rather than reason. Emotions are a great force in man's life."

"They are," he said.

Now carried away by my own emotions, I continued: "The playground is just an open space and the ball a mere trifle, not worth running after. The uniform that a sportsman wears is like any other wear. But everything begets a purpose and a value when men dress up, assemble on the playground, and start playing the game.

"To my mind, a mystic symbol is an aspirant's battle cry whereby he challenges the evil forces of disintegration. He wants to save man and his world from vice and degradation.

"For that matter-a temple is like any other house, and an image only a sculptured stone. To ring the bell is but the making of noise and to burn incense is pollution. But a devotee and his devout heart tell a different story: When he falls on his knees in all devotedness and faith, a dimension sublime is added to whatever he bows unto.

"The temple bells echo and re-echo the solemn call of his seeking. And the fragrant smoke of the incense that he burns carry his prayerful words on to the Most High. They seek to make Him aware of what he aspires to and sighs for. At moments, the temple walls are just not there and he finds him- self peering into an eternity of distant horizons to have a glimpse of the Unattainable.

"Out of love, you often play horse to your son and feed your daughter's lifeless doll, looking quite a bit earnest about it all. Out of benevolence, God plays up the game: He condescends to bless the image with His presence and turns Himself into a vision sublime before your mind's eye-lest you should deny His existence. Though you see Him not, He sees you all right.

"Friend! Worship the image of the Lord in all solemnity and visit the temple of your faith with pride. If anybody tries to be funny, treat his irreverence with the contempt that it deserves. Be it the Word, a Holy Book, an Idol or that which inspires faith and reverence, it is between you and your Lord."

"I understand."

A child's cry for her mother is more eloquent than a mouthful of words. Pray the child's way.

TRUTH IN MYTH AND MYTHOLOGY

According to the Puranas-to reward the meritorious deeds of Hiranyakshipu, a Daitya king, Lord Shiva once granted the sovereignty of the three worlds to him. When in power he issued orders that people should worship him and not the Lord.

Being devoted to God, Prahlada, his own son, refused to obey the royal mandate. Exasperated Hiranyakshipu persecuted him mercilessly for not respecting his authority. God was however on Prahlada's side and his faith could not be shaken.
Desperate and in anger, the tyrant at last ordered his son to embrace a red hot iron pillar and be burnt alive.
"Let your God save you now," he said sarcastically.

Animated by his faith, Prahlada readily walked up to the pillar, ready to throw his arms around it. However before he could do that, it burst in a flash-and there stood the Lord as Nara-simha!

Hiranyakshipu was slain and the devotee saved.

Now, sometimes, a poetic legend becomes a deeper truth than an historical fact. It is the other way round too: An historical fact becomes a poetic legend. The story of Prahlada is an historical fact turned a poetic legend-for he figures in our everyday devotional songs and is respected as a bhakta-a devotee of the Just One.

As a legend, the story of Prahlada, Hiranyakshipu, and the Saviour Nara-simha is an allegory:
Literally speaking, the word prahlada means extreme joy, great delight; bliss. It also means noise; clamour (of the conscience). The call of a heart in distress also is denoted by the word prahlada.

The word hiranyakshipu is hiranya+kshipu. Hiranya means gold and kshipu means bed, pillow; food and clothing. Thus Hiranyakshipu is a person who lusts for gold and does not heed the clamour of his conscience. Nor is he worried

about the joys of life that he misses and which his heart cries out for. To him gold is food and clothing. He wants to keep it under his pillow-hoard it.

The word nara-simha is nara+simha. Nara means man- to be human, humane and manlike. And simha means lion- to be ferocious, bold and courageous. It was as Nara-simha Avatara that God destroyed Hiranyakshipu-a greedy person's lust for gold despite the clamour of his conscience against resorting to it. Nara-simha Avatara thus represents God's stern warning to those who are possessed by a desire to grab and are not ready to heed the warning by their own conscience even.

It is easier now to understand the allegory: A greedy person worships only gold and cares for no other God. He wants people to worship him instead of the Lord. Blinded by lust, he is out to destroy the joy (prahlada) of his own heart and smother the clamour of his own conscience (prahlada again). God's benevolent but firm Hand strikes in time to save him from utter degradation.

Whenever human approach fails, a ruthless determination is needed to destroy man's lust for ill-gotten gold.

According to another legend, Hiranyaksha-twin brother of Hiranyakshipu-forcibly grabbed the wealth of the world and went into hiding. People suffered because of the antisocial activities of the accursed hoarder. They protested in vain.

Whenever man finds himself helpless, he turns to God. All prayed hard. At last, the Compassionate One responded to their call of distress and incarnated Himself as Varaha* to alleviate human suffering.

Hiranyaksha** was unearthed and put to death for his anti-social behaviour and heinous crimes.

Hiranyaksha is again an historical figure turned a poetic legend. Some tyrant king might have plundered the wealth of his people and left them to die of hunger. Men suffer when ever worldly wealth or political power is cornered by a few, determined to hold it fast.

Allegorically speaking, hiranyakshipu and hiranyaksha are two closely-allied social evils. They stem from avarice and are (i) to lust for gold inordinately and (ii) to hoard it (or hoard

* Varaha Avatara : I was not satisfied with the usual notions about this Avatara. Loss of political freedom has meant unscrupulous onslaughts on our ancient culture. Then, illiterate followers of many

a saint and sect try to run down the sublime truths of our religion in order to cover up the working of their own shallow minds.

While reading "The Tibeten Book of the Great Liberation" I came across a Tibeten goddess Vajra Varahi. Vajra is the invincible weapon of war-hence an all-powerful tool of offence. (Vajra Varahi is an all- powerful goddess.)

It occurred to me, and I think I am right, that the worshippers of Shakti initiated this goddess after having been inspired by the attributes and powers of Varaha. Varaha being Himself an incarnation of God Almighty did not need the attribute Vajra. (Incidentally I may mention that 'varahi' is the female of 'varaha'.)

That helped my mind. The attributes of the goddess Vajra Varahi are the attributes of Varaha Avatara.

They are: (i) speech, (ii) high initiatory power, and (iii) a sense of justice and fair play.

** The word hiranyaksha, like the word hiranyak shipu, gives the clue. (Hiranya+akshi (वहरण्याक्ष = वहरण्य + अवक्ष = वहरण्यमये अवक्षणी यस्य स: वहरण्याक्ष =hiranyaksha. Hiranya is gold and akshi means: eye. So Hiranyaksha is one who has his eye to gold. As a hoarder he buries himself alive and misses the joy of living. He gives no happiness to others and is despised by all right-minded persons.

any other commodity) to create thereby an artificial scarcity- in order to exploit the situation for personal gain.

(i) To destroy Hiranyakshipu God incarnated Himself as Nara-simha. That indicates: we should, in the first instance, persuade a greedy person to change his attitude. When human approach fails, we should not hesitate to use force and be ruthless even. One man should not be allowed to make a great many suffer.

(ii) To destory Hiranyaksha God incarnates Himself as Varaha. Shorn of mystic glamour, the word varaha means (i) high initiatory power, (ii) forceful speech, (iii) sense of social justice and fair play. And the word hiranyaksha, as already stated, denotes in everyday language: hoarding for the purpose of black-marketing. It is trading in human misery.

The allegory stands thus:

member of society once again. An aroused social conscience is a great force and is capable of doing more good.

Last! Usually we merely grumble and do nothing tangible to eradicate social evils-even if they affect us vitally. Only when God incarnates Himself as Varaha (viveka, the right awareness and the right initiative) in our hearts that we pick up courage and take the right steps to set things right.

Truth in myth and mythology is worth looking into and looking up to-for guidance. Study Hindu mythology in terms of its allegorical sense.

Who says God is your own private affair? As long as you live amongst us all it is not. Your way of life, the faith that you profess, and the beliefs that you swear by do affect me and society as a whole.

Believe as you may but do value the values built up so assiduously for the good of mankind.

V-NOW CRISIS-THE JNANA (ज्ञान)

NOW THE CRISIS

Crisis? It is a difficult situation, a crucial stage, a critical time, a decisive event. In the present context it is an auspicious turning point in the course of a human venture-spiritual or otherwise. This dimension of the word crisis reminds me of a seed, and also of Mati (मयत:)-a dimension of the Eightfold Path of Yoga.

As a seed the crisis* is the essence, the source, the origin, or the beginning of a new order-even a new era. It heralds a new phase of human progress in any field and at any level.

As Mati, it helps man to resolve even the most crucial crisis in human condition, and helps him to transcend himself even at a critical juncture-while in quest of the Ultimate Absolute.

I do admit that a crisis affects different people differently. It unnerves some, unmans others--because time is not yet ripe for a meaningful change in their lives. They lack as yet the maturing experience of a deep crisis-that reaches the very essence of man's life on earth.

Friend! A crisis in any field of human activity brings about an awareness of the need for change. It puts man on the road to progress, self-fulfilment even. It, as well, calls forth what is best in him so that he can rise to full human stature.

Not to care for your fellow man and to live in isolation is apathy, a deadly sin: It is the greatest tragedy that can ever befall a man and is more hateful than hatred itself.

* While writing about the crisis, I am reminded, time and time again, of the word jnan (ज्ञान). It is difficult to describe the significance of this word but every Hindu understands it.

CRISIS-ESSENCE OF HUMAN PROGRESS

Herewith the crisis again: What is it? Whether of confidence, faith or commitment (व्रत), it is one of the most vital factors that govern all human relations, conditions and undertakings. It is a point at which hostile elements (द्वि, dvandv) are most tensely opposed. As well, it is a point at which a decisive change occurs in the condition of a sick person, leading either to recovery or death. (A person can be physically, mentally, morally or spiritually ill.)

Also, it is a stage in a sequence of events at which the trend of all future events is determined. In essence the crisis is the essence of a vital change in human condition.

Think of a change and you are reminded of instability. However, the change that a true crisis brings about is decisive. That is where a true crisis scores and that is what is commendable about it.

Now the two dimensions of a crisis:

(1) The moment of truth: It is the crucial moment in a bull fight at which the matador is about to make the kill. In the life of a person it is the crisis that calls for making an irremedial choice or making a decision of great consequence.

(2) A high time, or a high moment: It is the time just before it is too late. It is just the appropriate time when the right step is taken to save a situation, consciously or unconsciously.

Whether it is a crisis, the moment of truth or a high time- they are important dimensions of man's life on earth. After reading the biographies of great men, who made history in one field or another, and going through the lives of noble souls, who fought for one human cause or another, I have come to the

conclusion that just as the essence of weather is change, the essence of human progress is either a crisis or any one of its dimensions.

May I now quote from the book that is lying before me just by chance

"...religious history is as the history of Peter walking over the waves towards Christ. At one moment he is on the crest and Christ is seen; at another he is in the trough of the waves and the vision is veiled..."

When the vision is veiled, only blind implicit faith in God can sustain the soul till Christ holds her in an ineffable embrace.
The idea of measuring human progress down the centuries by crests and hollows fascinates me....
Lightning strikes only when there is a thunderstorm. Wisdom dawns only when man is in the throes of one deep crisis or another.

CRISIS-A MOMENT OF DESTINY

Friend! I love God. Devotedly I follow the path. But I am never sure whether I am going ahead or just marking time. How is one to judge?

The carts make ruts* in the dirt (unmetalled) roads. When the ruts become deeper, the cartman finds it easier to drive along them-instead of breaking fresh ground.

If the surface of the road is not firm but wet, spongy and soft-the wheels of the cart sink deeper into the ruts and make them deeper still. It goes on till the ruts become so deep that, one day, even the axle of a moving cart sinks into the ground underneath. The wheels then stop turning and the cart comes to a sudden halt. After lashing the horse in vain, the cartman climbs down from his seat to see what is wrong and where. The cart is all right. Nothing wrong with the wheels either. Nor is it a case of the broken axle. Only the wheels have got bogged down, that is all. How to get the cart going? That is the problem.
* In my childhood, I used to watch the heavy bullock-carts move along the ruts on the d
S~~ometimes, in the rainy season, a cart used to get stuck. To get it out of the~~ rut used to l
f~~or the cartman.~~

To lift the cart bodily needs a crane. Or the help of a great many men should be forthcoming. The cartman alone cannot do it. To cut across the deep ruts requires digging another sloping-upward channel. The cart then moves up to

ground level-along this new incline. To get the cart out of the rut is the aim-manage it any way you like.

Now, there are ruts (beaten tracks) 'sunk' deep in our brain-maybe in the mind too. They are the fixed procedures and many a routine course of thought and action-namely habits, notions, mental impressions, beliefs etc.

When these ruts deepen-become deep-rooted-man finds it easier to act as they urge or impel instead of breaking fresh ground in the realm of thought and action. Unless a person is firm and not a weakling, he is likely to fall into one rut or another and become a slave to habits, beliefs, idiosyncrasies even.

As this sorry state of affairs develops and goes on for some time, man starts losing his sense of identity*-his very soul as such. And a crisis of commitment or confidence overtakes him.

Now, life is a growing process. It brooks no thwarting of Its plan or progress. Its essence is change. The history of man is full of stormy upheavals and many a violent revolution has left its mark on the eternity of its moral fiber and spiritual fabric. The uprisings and revolts churned the human stuff in and out-wherefrom** rose the soul-fresh ideas, new ideals and the nascent faith. This faith*** in its nascent state was

* Identity is, literally, the condition or fact of being some specific person or thing-it is individuality in a narrow sense.

** From the violent churnings.

*** Faith in its nascent state: The word nascent is from the world of science. I will explain it in terms of what I wrote in my book FLAMING FAITH:

Early history of different faiths and religions shows how a great prophet animates his followers to a spirit of surprising zeal, noble endeavour and supreme sacrifice. He gives a new dimension to the converts' lives and they accomplish what they could not possibly do otherwise.

Unknown to them, in their hearts is 'liberated' a new faith which arouses them spiritually and sparks a miraculous revolution. Their lives become holy-morally and spiritually lively and dynamic. Fired by the compatible with the outlook and the aspirations of the era concerned.

A change is the need of the hour and is imperative. So a new era is always being ushered in, even while the bells toll and the burnt out ruins smoulder.

To continue-like the cartman whose cart got stuck in the slushy ruts-man in the throes of a crisis of commitment or confidence climbs down from his now untenable position to see what is wrong and where. Nothing wrong whatever. No serious damage done. Only the mind got bogged down in the hackneyed and trite sentiments. No zest for life, no spontaneity of expression or action, man is listless, lacks liveliness and is given to apathy. His growth at all levels is in doldrums. What shall he do? Is there no way to get out of the rut where- in he finds himself bogged? Let us see.

By cutting across (transcending) the deep-rooted beliefs turned obsessions, man should initiate, create and develop a new way of life-a new incline*. That will bring about a healthy change in his attitude and he will aspire to attain a higher human stature.

Whenever man is fired by an urge** to get out of the rut and to break fresh ground in the realms of thought and action-it is the moment of his destiny, a high time: the most appropriate moment for solving a vital problem or saving a critical situation. Onward march of man and a sure sign of human progress.

To live up to the expectations of one's own saner self is always worth striving for.

dynamics of a newly-liberated faith, they change the course of human history. It is this faith in its nascent state which I call FLAMIMG FAITH. Literally the word 'nascent' means: The condition of an element at the instant it is set free (liberated) from a combination in which it has previously existed.

* To have a progressive disposition, or a look-sharp and look-up bent of mind.

** This urge to get out of the rut-this urge to transcend whatever bogs man down-is the cutting edge of SAT (सि)-the will to live and to endure.

A FRIEND'S HIGH TIME

There was a friend of mine, a man of religion. He had a set routine and was in the habit of performing certain rituals. As well, every day, he recited one mantra or another and kept a count. Once he narrated an incident that had changed his very way of life:

One day, a friend of mine managed to take me out for a walk. In the small hours of the night we walked on till we reached the river Ravi (Panjab). There I became restless and wanted to run back home for my daily puja and prayers.

But, unmindful of my uneasiness and anxiety, my friend said: "Oh, the beauty sublime of the early hours! Soon the day will dawn and..."

I had however no stomach for all that and said: "Stay on if you like but let me go."

Before I could go on, he cut in: "Beware of your sense of virtuous living. Once you blindly accept its authority, your lips are sealed and you begin to lose initiative for a creative thought and a purposeful endeavour.

"But...

I wanted to say something but my friend continued light- heartedly: "Leave your God alone today and come...let us... but why don't you meditate here, now?..."

And his voice trailed off into silence...as if he himself was surprised by an urge to meditate.

I protested at first but was soon carried away beyond the reach of the monotonous routine by the spell of the waters on the move. The humming silence all around had its own fascination and stunning charm. A gladdened heart it was that wanted to make the most of the newfound liberty, maybe liberation....

At long last I could drag myself away from this spiritual spree. It was a sight to see my friend sitting sulking under the shade of a tree. It was almost midday. Waiting is always a monotonous task and a wearisome affair.

Later in the day, I met my friend and said: "To break away from the set routine is the road to progress! To climb out of the deep ruts of long-established habits, and to fly away at a tangent is a great experience.

"To be hemmed in by one inhibition or another shackles the mind, hampers progress in one field or another. Man loses initiative, trudges along the ruts-the beaten tracks-and goes on living listlessly, mechanically. He misses the real go and the very thrill of being alive!"

As if under some spell, I got up, gleefully yelled, and jumped in the air on to a seat beside my friend, and with a wild sweep of my arms, I continued: "As I sat there, I felt a strong joy surging within. Soon all sense of time was lost, and I was strangely aware of another dimension flaming into view.

"Though my eyes were closed, I could see the sun rise in the east. Its rays rushed forward to embrace me and, strangest of all, turned my entire being into a flaming splendour..

Again I was lost in a deep reverie as I sat motionless, wrapped up in the voice of silence, its melody. My face was bathed in a rare sweetness and I was tingling with the joy of it. When at last I came to, I heard my colleague say: "Good luck to you. You had had a wonderful spiritual experience brought about by Surya Namaskara (सूि यनमस्कार).

"What are you saying? I know so little."

"Surya Namaskara is one of the yogic practices that the yogis perform as the day dawns. In your case, your faith and devotion have worked a miracle..."

Before my friend could go on, I cut him short and said: "Ah, that gives me an idea. The yogi does not worship the sun as such. The practice of Surya Namaskara conditions him-- physically and mentally-to imbibe the life-giving principle of the sun that its rays carry.

Being in a happy mood and not ready to stop, I added: "That is not the end of it, sir. It was a day of surprises. I had an appointment with a learned scientist who had to deliver a lecture for the benefit of my students.

"On my way back home, I was suddenly reminded of it. I reached home, got ready, and hurried to the college. I was already late for the appointment.'

For a while I was again lost in a trance, but soon after I began dreamily: "Here! I enter the college gate. I am a little anxious. Hard to explain to the Principal for being so very late? Any one of my colleagues could have welcomed the honourable guest.

"I go straight to the class room. The students are coming in. One of them gives me a letter. It is from the Principal, saying that the visiting scientist is coming late in the evening. That means I am in time for the guest.

"The boys sit down. It is all so quiet-not the slightest murmur, so serene. No usual whispers even. I wonder... Suddenly one of the students gets up to say: 'Sir, is it true that the scientists do not believe in God?'

"I am quiet for a while then say absent-mindedly: 'They are only waiting for the maturing experience of a crisis of faith. At the moment they are neither here nor there.

My friend, who once narrated the whole incident to me, was then a professor of science at Lahore (now in Pakistan) in one of the colleges there.

Whether a parent, the big brother or someone in authority- they should change places with the offenders, then strike.

A LETTER

Friend!

At one time or another a seeker finds himself groping instead of walking in His Light. As rough storms of uncertainties rage and doubts assail his mind, he finds it difficult to walk even in his own light. Everyday-values crumble before his eyes and he is left wondering and perplexed.

What a paradox! Instead of budding faith buoying up, a strange confusion confounds the seeker's mind. Sometimes, he is in a deadly haste to disown his own faith even. At other times, the buoyancy of his spirit challenges attention and is praiseworthy: It inspires, it exalts.

Why should it be so?

Sincerely,

Nath.

CRISIS OF FAITH-VASUDEVA'S

MOMENT OF TRUTH

For the benefit of those who do not know, let me narrate the circumstance of Lord Krishna's birth. It is a story of Vasudeva's moment of truth and the then man's moment of destiny.

Kansa, the evil king of Mathura-on-Yamuna, had put into prison his own sister Devaki and her husband Vasudeva. For, it had been predicted that his sister's child would put an end to his existence.

One after another, he killed six of their children till it was time for Lord Krishna's advent. Urged by Providence, Vasudeva conspired to replace the Holy Child with that of Nanda Baba and mother Yashoda of Gokul, a principality across the river.

Somehow, a crisis of confidence, the birth of a new faith and a crisis of the elements go together. Whenever a new faith is born or a saviour takes his birth-tempests rage not only in men's hearts but also in the world outside.

True enough, Lord Krishna, the Saviour of all times, was born on such a dark stormy night.

It is said that the stormy elements at first lulled to sleep the prison guards, then made it possible for Vasudeva to cross the river safely. Once on the other side, he handed over the Holy Child to Nanda Baba and brought back his daughter before, daybreak-without anybody knowing it.

Next morning, Kansa killed Nanda Baba's innocent child while Lord Krishna was safe in mother Yashoda's lap.

One stormy night, long ago-carrying the Newborn, concealed in a basket, stealthily came Vasudeva on to the bank of the river Yamuna. He had been helped by the stormy but kindly elements to escape from the prison.

The river was in spate and the crossing difficult. Its waves rose mountain high and their splash was desperate. Lightning flashed and the howling tempest threatened torrential rains.

While Vasudeva stood undecided, across the river Nanda Baba waited anxiously scanning the troubled horizon. Why should the kindly elements, he wailed, be so formidable a barrier?

At last, urged by an equally formidable urgency, Vasudeva made up his mind to plunge into the river. He decided to trust the fury of the elements instead of Kansa's clemency.

The current was swift and the waters rough. As the waters rose, Vesudeva raised the basket higher. He was afraid lest the stormy waves should carry the Holy Babe away unto their fatal embrace.

The waves rose higher. As the waves rose higher, still higher and higher still, our desperate Vasudeva raised the basket, in which Krishna lay smiling, higher, still higher, and higher still. Oh, the agony!

Presumptuous indeed on his, Vasudeva's, part to try to save the Saviour and that too from His own elements! Little did he know that they were only eager to have a feel of the Holy Touch.

Vasudeva was ignorant, but the Newborn knew. While he struggled with the mad rush of the wild-with-delight surging waves, the Playful One kicked the covering away and let the splashing Yamuna waters kiss His lotus feet.

The moment a devout kiss was made possible by the Kindly Master, the grateful river waters began to flow ankle deep. A miracle indeed!

In a few quick blissful strides, Vasudeva crossed the river and was soon with Nanda Baba as arranged. Leaving the Holy Child in his arms, Vasudeva brought back to the prison Yashoda's new born girl. The prison gate stood ajar and the guards were still asleep.

However, the moment he stepped in and was safe in his prison cell-it was all as before: the gates locked and secure, and the guards wide awake and alert.

Dear friend! When a new faith (Krishna-consciousness in the present case) is born in somebody's heart, he is anxious to save it from the stranglehold of evil. That is a signal for trouble and he is in for one crisis or another-whether of confidence, courage, commitment or faith. Instead of being at peace and in a state of mental poise and equanimity, the seeker finds him- self being harried by all sorts of doubts, misgivings and idle wranglings. Alas, life is so very full of paradoxes!

Baffled by the predicament he finds himself in and shaken by the stormy turn of events, the hard-pressed man doesn't know what to do. He is so very nonplussed.

As the crisis deepens, the newborn faith (Krishna-consciousness) sets a new healthy trend: instead of keeping itself dangling in the air as a seeker's brainchild, it gets itself fully involved in his everyday life and works miracles.

Look up and ahead whenever in the throes of a crisis. The ascendancy of the human spirit and a new faith are in the offing.

A SEEKER'S HIGH TIME

Today I shall describe a man's hour of crisis and that of his triumph-his moment of truth and that of destiny.

At the turn of the last century-dressed in white and well- groomed, a man was out in Vrindavana* for an evening stroll. He walked on leisurely till he saw a woman sweeping the dusty lane.

"Stop! Wait till I pass," he called.

The woman looked surprised while he kept up: "You raise too much dust.

• Vrindavana is the sacred place where Lord Krishna spent the days of his infancy and child
Indignant but amused, she stopped for a while and said: "Are ja ja-Vrindavana ki dhuli ko to devata tarsen*."

(अरे जा जा - वृन्दावन की धूली को तो देवता तरसते॥)

Before our friend could say anything, she added: "The sacred dust of Vrindavana holds to its bosom the miraculous touch of Lord Krishna's romping lotus feet." And without so much as even once looking up, she went on with her job....

Deeply stirred by the directness of her words and moved by the sublimity of her indifference-the man was struck by the lightning flash of Lord Krishna's vision and he fell down unconscious-crumbled to pieces.

The evening shadows lengthened. They were soon lost in the oncoming twilight.

The twilight deepened into dusk.

After some time, in the quiet of the moonlit Vrindavana, lo! down its lane came Lord Krishna, the Playful One, playing upon His flute. The lane turned into a beautiful grove, full of wild flowers and beautiful foliage. From all sides came dancing-gopis** and Radha, the one and only. The Playful Child stood amongst them all, smiling affably.

In a remote corner of the grove, lay the afflicted man witnessing Ras Lila***-gopis and Radha dancing in tune with the Playful One's flute. Overwhelmed by the exuberance of it all, he fell back sobbing. Suddenly the flute fell from Krishna's hands and the dancing feet of the gopis came to a sudden halt.
In no time, the Unseen Hand brought the flute to the lips of Radha-the one and only. She looked at Krishna. Lord Krishna looked at her. She gave Him a smile as if to say: "I

* "What are you saying? Even gods yearn for the sacred dust of Vrindavana.' **

Radha and gopis were Lord Krishna's playmates. Allegorically speaking, gopis are the human aspirations that aspire to His love.
Radha is the seeker's will to take the right initiative for finding fulfilment in Love. And Krishna is God, the Eternal Lover. Whenever man aspires high and is ready to do the right thing, he is in the
presence of God, the Playful One.

*** Allegorically speaking in Ras Lila are involved: divinity of man (Krishna), human aspirations (gopis) and the right initiative (Radha).

understand Thy Ways." And it was as before. Radha and the gopis danced on and on!

Bare feet and running wild, Lord Krishna came to where lay the shattered man, struck by His Grace some while before. The Compassionate One bent over and picked him up, bit by bit, piece by piece-till He had gathered him all unto Himself. Lo! The man was made one whole again!

Friend! Your life is Vrindavana-the eternal playground of Krishna, the Playful One. It vibrates with the sacred touch of His lotus feet and is always athrill with the miraculously sweet chime of His silver anklets. The woman out to sweep the sinful lanes of everyday life is Jijnasa (श्जज्ञासा)-man's quest of the Ultimate.

Just as dust was raised when the Vrindavana lane was being swept, all sorts of thoughts cross your mind when you are mindful of Him. Keep your poise. Let them be. For, unlike the everyday thoughts that you are usually exposed to, these thougts hold to their bosom the sublime touch of the Lord.

Seeker! Long ago, when once Munshi Ram, a friend, narrated this incident to me, my first reaction was: In spite of evil, also because of it, man does, sooner or later, find him- self in the presence of the Compassionate One!

All of us have our moments of saintliness and weakness. While the good avail themselves of the former, the bad and the unscrupulous welcome the latter.

CRISIS OF VALUES-TULSI DASS'S HIGH TIME

Everybody has to face a crisis of values at one time or another. Here is the narration of such a crisis in the life of Goswami Tulsi Dass, the man who wrote the Ramayana.

Tulsi Dass was married to Ratnavali and they lived happily together in Soron-on-Ganga. Though it was not a love marriage, they were deeply in love and their love for each other had already become a legend.

One day, Ratnavali's brother came from Badri, a village just across the holy river, and said: "How is it that you have not cared to come to felicitate your brother, even on the Raksha Bandhan day? Anyway now come with me and celebrate. The whole family is waiting for you."

"But, dear brother,..."

"I know Tulsi Dass has gone out to address a religious conference and will not be back till the day after."

"But how can I..."

"Even if Tulsi Dass gives a slip to the organisers of the conference and comes back today itself, he will understand. Doesn't he know that it is the Raksha Bandhan festival today?"

"Of course, he knows it."

The day was clear. Both the brother and the sister ferried across the river and joined the family celeberations. Towards the evening a storm began to rage. As the dusk deepened it was worse. "Even if Tulsi Dass comes back to Soron, he will understand that I am here in Badri with my people and will not worry... Then he knows where I keep something to eat whether he is at home or not," she reassured herself time and again. She felt restless all the same. O, the agony of the separated lovers!

In spite of the splash, terrific thunderclaps and the tempestuous winds, Ratnavali sat peering into the dark stormy night-in the balcony of her parent's house, facing the river in spate. Every now and then the lightning flashed and the mountain high waves splashed into view because of that.

"What if Tulsi Dass were already battling his way across....

She shuddered at the very thought of it, went inside and brought out a lamp....

Tears trickling down her cheeks, she continued her prayerful vigil as if on it all depended the very safety of the man of her heart and dreams...

Suddenly she heard voices. At long last she came out of the tearful, troubled trance, and saw-she saw her husband standing in front of her, all drenched and gasping for breath.

"You have come?" Ratnavali's voice was feeble.

"Yes, Ratnavali."

There was anxiety in Tulsi Dass's voice.

"From Soron?"

Now her voice was full of pain.

"Yes, Ratnavali."

His voice was full of anguish.

"Dear, is it that even the fearful storm could not stop you from coming over?"

Before he could answer, she added: "What if you had been washed away by the swirling waters?"
Now there was a strange sort of determination in her voice and no agony.

"Ratnavali, I would have died in any case... You know I cannot live without you," Tulsi Dass sobbed out.

Just then Ratnavali's sister-in-law came, stood smiling for a while, then went away...The womanly pride of hers in her man got badly hurt and she was desperate...

Nothing is on record to show what passed on in the lovers' hearts except the couplet that worked a miracle and changed the very essential circumstance of Tulsi Dass's life:

"हाड-चाम-मि ेह मम, ता सों ऐसी प्रीयत ।

यतसु आधध रघुनाथ पै, भवसस समटयत भवभीयत ।।"

"If you had, my love, even half as much love for Bhagwan Rama as you have for this bag of flesh and bones-you would have nothing to fear of in this phenomenal world."

It was the moment of destiny of Goswami Tulsi Dass, his high time. The very next moment he was a changed person. He renounced all and everything and vanished into the stormy night, never to come back again.**

It was Ratnavali's moment of truth. It was a triumph of woman's love for and pride in her man. Supreme sacrifice indeed! Deliberately she took the risk of losing her husband, but she could not bear to see the dignity of their marital love being lowered to such an extent as to become a laughingstock. Triumph of man lies in true womanhood- that is the essence of Hinduism. It is always Sita Ram and never Ram Sita, always Radha Krishna and never Krishna Radha. A Hindu not only knows it but also understands. He may not be able to explain it, that is a different matter. Faith can never be explained in words, it can only be believed in and lived up to.

** However it is said that Tulsi Dass did come back home to be by the side of Ratnavali at the time of her death.

It was after this incident that he wrote the Ramayana in verse which has always inspired and shall for ever inspire millions of people the world over.

A CRISIS THAT WAS NOT

Majnu-a prince-loved Laila and Laila loved him. They could not marry because her parents did not agree. The parents used to have the final say-the word absolute. Neither force nor elopement being possible, he went into wilderness.

Every Thursday Laila used to give alms to the poor, the destitute. Once Majnu also joined the crowd storming her palace before sunrise.

The day dawned. With the first ray of the sun, Laila appeared on the threshold of her palace gates. A wild stir- and the destitute lined up. As Majnu had never before been out abegging, he did not know what to do. The others jostled him away-begging bowl and all.

Laila was wearing a veil. With her dainty fingertips, she touched the gifts and the slave girl gave them away. One by one, the beggars came to get their dole till it was Majnu's turn. His legs began to tremble beneath him as he approached his love.

Near her-athrob he stood and his shaking hand unsteadied the bowl it held. Oh, the fire!

The delay irked the slave girl and she said: "Look up!"

Majnu readied himself and steadied the bowl.

Laila at once recognized the prince, dear to her heart. He was astir with emotion and awfully unquiet. Alas, close by, yet so far away! *Whether it is love of man for a woman or a woman's love for man, it does not essentially lead to God-realization.

Love of fellowmen is a thing apart. It is a higher value of life.

Love in any form and at any level must be sublimated (like any other sense-urge) before it can be of any help to a seeker.

"The princess awaits," angrily called out the girl again as the unfortunate lover stood, steadying himself and his bowl.

Laila lifted her veil a little, hit the slave girl in the face, and flashed out: "The princess knows."

Poor girl screamed with pain, staggered and fell....

Laila struck again-this time she hit the beggar's bowl that her lover held. As it fell on the ground, she crushed it under her feet. All stood aghast! But Majnu laughed and was glad.

"Laila! My love! You have done the right thing," he said aloud for all to hear.

Angry whispers. Dangerous stir. Somebody had recognised the unfortunate lover. But before the guards could cut him down, a friend put him on his horse and galloped off.

Later, Majnu told his friends: "Laila was right. She did the right thing. The begging bowl could not possibly contain what I wanted. What the bowl could hold was of no avail to me."

The friends looked away. The prince, they thought, had lost his mind. The wisdom behind the words was beyond them.

As and when man is in quest of God, the Ultimate, he should not carry the cumbersome begging bowl-desire's abject solicitude. Solicitude of any kind cannot 'contain' the Infinite One and the worldly pleasures that it can hold are of no use to the ardent seeker. To him the spirit of quest is a call to control his desires and to demolish their solicitude-leaving him unencumbered to follow the path of God-realization.

A CRISIS THAT WAS

Once upon a time, a seeker went to a saint for guidance. The kindly guru tried his best to talk him into awareness of God, but could not.

"Sorry, young man. No need to despair however. Here, take it."

The disciple looked at the image of the Lord and hesitated.

"Not just a sculptured stone, God is in it. You cannot see Him but He does."

"He sees all right-but...I also want to see Him," the seeker replied.

"Worship Him in all solemnity and be blessed with His benign presence."

Taking his guru at his word the disciple placed the image on the altar in a temple far away from the proverbial madding crowd. There he would get ready early and worship the Lord as directed. Time passed. More time passed. In course of time, daily rituals became a routine affair and he went through them mechanically. No buoyancy of spirit, nor the fire of worship to animate him-only listless goings about.

That too could however not go on for long. At last the crisis of belief overtook him and he felt all the more miserable. Disgusted and badly stung, one day, he walked away leaving the temple doors ajar.

In a town nearby the aspirant found himself being taken care of by a girl of ill-repute. She readily agreed to accompany him for a night of dining and wining and love.

Both young and gay and groomed, in the gathering dusk they began to get ready for the nightlong gaieties. It was going to be a jolly good night for the ascetic: the wine, a beautiful woman and her sensuous charm-ready to rake him up inside out.

The youthful charmer danced full of life and verve. She was sweet, young and lovely. And all the charms of her lewd trade were not unknown to her.

To warm up the dark cold night, a fire had been hastily built and it was burning bright. Higher rose its flames that cast their weird shadows on the trees around. Used to charming her way to the hearts of men, the dancing girl closed in upon the young runaway male. Eyes flashing a suggestive charm, herself all afire with a fierce desire and charmed, she filled her cup with her choicest wine and...

As he shivered with a strangely tingling desire, she brought the cup close to his lips. He hesitated as his cloistered virtue felt nonplussed and tottered. The young

charmer however was in no mood to accept defeat. She nestled her beautiful head on his shoulder. Oh, the devastating lure of it.

Our woman gave an impatient sign and the attendants vanished into the night.

Now they were alone, just the two of them. Never were a man and a woman desired so much by each other. To cap it all the woman was at her oldest game of lure and love.

The man swooned in her arms as she nestled closer to him.

Again, he shivered as something hot surged within. He groaned as the spurt of rising passions gave him tremors. Suddenly he leapt aside as if struck by lightning. Before the woman could say anything, he struck her full in the face and shouted at the top of his voice: "You fool! Can't you see that we are not alone? The door is ajar and the Lord is watching. For shame!" He stood where he was, for...

There! To his utter dismay, on the altar where the image was, now stood the Lord!

"But why? Why today of all the days?" the ascetic muttered helplessly. In response, as it were, the Lord spoke in measured rumbling tones: "It is only today of all the days that you were truly aware that I AM!"

Next morning people flocked to the temple in great numbers and it was hard for the ascetic to explain what had really happened. He was too much full of the Miraculous to say anything. But the people talked.

Someone remarked: "I have heard him talk to the Lord."

Another one said: "He has not only found his faith but has also found his God."

Still another confided: "Though he had to face a deep crisis of commitment and faith, he got over it by God's grace.

And he was right. For, it was not only a deep crisis but it was also the moment of his destiny.

After a spell of self-indulgence out of frustration, both the yoga-bhrashta (िोगभ्रष्ट) and the fallen angel come back to a life of prayer and meditation- with a greater zeal, a stronger determination and a deeper faith.

A SINNER'S MOMENT OF TRUTH

A friend once narrated: Somewhere in India, we were once surveying an area for building a dam across a river. Every day, in the evening, we had to cross over to the other bank to reach our headquarters. That was long long ago.

One day Shera, the boatman, refused to ferry us across- the river was in spate. Some of us had a mind to stay back, but others refused. We were not alone however. Another group was also wanting to be rowed across. A dancing girl and her companions had to give a performance somewhere, that very night. While we were still arguing, the young dancer came out from inside the boatman's hut and said: "Please, sir. I have to dance tonight." She addressed one of the officers whom her professional eye had picked up correctly.

The officer smiled at the woman of easy virtue and ordered the boatman to take to the oars. The boatman had to.

"Where is the helper?" One of the officers later demanded. "Sir, he died last year while trying to save a drowning man," said Shera.
"Why don't you hire another hand? It should not be difficult," twittered the young charmer.
"Young lady, I am a poor man. The man who died was my only son."

Visibly moved by the tragedy in the old man's life, she said: "How sad... May God bless the departed soul."

After a while the boat was in midstream. The waters were rough and the current dangerously swirling. The old man was however doing his best. Suddenly one of the oars got caught in an uprooted tree being carried by the stormy waves. He had to let it go to save the boat from overturning.
The boat got a bad jolt and our Don Jaun fell down. He had kept standing, making eyes at the pretty girl and toying with the spare oar. Somebody tried to help him but the oar in his hand was washed away by the angry waves.

Dismayed, the old man threw up his arms. Next moment, however, he was himself again. Now he had in his hands a long bamboo pole, and was battling with the swirling waters.

Someone stood up in panic. That made the boat unsteady and there was a savage howl. The old man however spoke gently: "Sit down, son, where you are, and pray. God is great!"

As he said this, his old bearded face was suddenly lit up by the last rays of the setting sun. In all solemnity, for just one moment, he raised his hands.-Next moment the bamboo pole was also swept away by the tempestuous waves. The worst of it!

Panic-stricken everyone of us-the boat was being carried away by the swollen river. Hands held together prayerfully, Shera spelled out: "Many a time God has saved me from a watery grave. But today, it seems, someone amongst us will have to atone for his sins."

Suddenly an anguished cry rang out. Someone broke down and cried out.

However, the boatman relentlessly rumbled on: "Soon the boat will be swept down the cataract and... May God forgive us our sins."

Another piteous cry, and a female voice was heard to sob out: "O, the Benevolent One, the Kindly Lord! Avenge by all means, but why? But why should these innocent people suffer because of my sins? I have sinned and I deserve no mercy. Let Thy wrath..."

In the gathering dusk, death moaned dolefully....

"Fall on your knees. O, ye daughter of eve. It's never too late to beg forgiveness. God forgives those who repent."

Whether it was Shera or a voice from the heavens above, no- body could tell.

The fall...the waterfall he had warned of. Down the cataract, down its roaring waters went the boat and all....

"Everything went blank before my eyes....I remember nothing whatever except that the boat was near the bank and Shera stood in knee-deep waters, holding it for us to jump on to safety.

"Before everything went blank, I vividly remember to have seen the young girl falling on her knees and raise her hands to pray in all solemnity. Lips quivering and tears streaming down her cheeks, she was sobbing out words of deep repentance.

"And it was she alone who sat praying-calm, serene-all else was bedlam."

At the end Mr. Kumar spoke dreamily: "The heavenly glow on the repentant sinner's face gave me an undying hope that the Benevolent One won't let me be doomed to an ignominious end."

Prayer does wonders and miracles do happen.

CHHAJJU BHAKTA'S HIGH TIME

Once an aspirant turned round and said: "What is this self-mastery or self-command (मयत) that you people often speak of ?"

Before I could say anything, he added: "Define it to cover life as a whole and not just a part of it."

Though a difficult question, almost a problem, I should tackle it, I told myself: As I pondered, I was suddenly reminded of a saint's early life, and I said: "Friend, sometimes an adequate explanation of a single word involves a whole world of experience and wisdom. Here :

"Long ago, there lived at Lahore (now in Pakistan) a noble person, Chhajju by name. Though a man of religion and solemnly devoted, he was nowhere. No peace of mind, no spiritual stamina, no consciousness of the higher order either- nor was he anywhere nearer the goal of God-realization.

"Once, while narrating his tale of woe to a friend, he was asked by a woman out to sweep a road clean: 'Chhajju! Do not stand in the middle of the road. Be on this side or that.'

"The casual remark struck the right chord. What lifelong counting of wooden beads could not, it sparked off. Divine wisdom dawned upon him and he stood electrified, mystified, entranced.

"Later, when himself again, he walked up to her, gratefully touched her feet, and said, 'Maa! You are right. Till now I was neither here, nor there. Rest assured hereafter I shall be wholly devoted to the Lord and nothing shall ever distract...'

"So saying he, still in a trance, walked up to where he lived-a room upstairs, his chaubaara.

"All the while the woman went on sweeping, unconcerned.

"Now it was not a high time of the street cleaner, nor a moment of her destiny- it was in fact Chhajju's moment of truth that called for making a decision of great consequence."

At this point my friend cut in: "I fail to understand..."

Before he could go on, I said: "Allow me please.....sometimes; blessed by the Lord the life of a person in the throes of a crisis of commitment or faith takes a sudden turn and swerves: The true self then takes over and the. usurper self is stripped of its command."

"Do you mean to say that self-mastery is an ability to move in the right direction at some critical juncture in one's life?"

"It is," I affirmed.

Friend! There is something divine about a crisis in one's life. But we are so much given to fight it out that in the melee which ensues we miss the divine aspect of it.

Man becomes truly human when the right choice is an ability and not a mere coincidence or just a chance.

प्रधानमन्त्री भवन

PRIMEMINISTER'S HOUSE

NEW DELHI

June 13, 1984

Dear Yogi Raushan Nathji,

Thank you for sending me your book 'The Hindu Believes'. I have read your account of my father's speech in Pahalgam in 1945.

Yours sincerely,

(Indira Gandhi)

Yogi Raushan Nathji,

A-31, Naraina Vihar,

New Delhi-110028

India and Crisis of the World

Conscience

Deepak Manmohan, Captain Sharma, Mrs. and Lt. Mehta, their son, 6, and I-we were staying in a hotel at Pehalgam (Kashmir), a beautiful resort for people there on vacation. The year 1945 and it was summertime.

One day, rather early, Deepak went out and did not come back for quite some time. At one time there was quite a commotion out in the Bazar. Wherefore? No idea.

After some time: "Here, Captain! A surprise. Here, Mehta Sahib. A surprise!" That was Deepak highly excited and happy-happily waving a one rupee note and saying: "Great! Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has signed it for me....."

"Pandit-ji ?"

"Where is he?"

"How is it possible?"

"He is very much in town. I had gone to join a procession organised for his reception by the people here. Now a meeting is being held to honour the congress leaders after their release from the British jails*. Jawaharlal Nehru will speak. Come, let us go....."

That was it! Now I would see Pandit-ji close by. Way back in 1929-30 at Lahore-

I had missed the historic Indian National Congress session**. Yet a student of D.A.V. College (Lahore), I had gone home for Christmas holidays.

Later in the day--After an evening stroll, on our way back, we saw preparations going on for a get-together. A table and a chair were already there for the occasion.

On enquiry I was told that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru alone will address the assembled few. Soon Pandit-ji arrived. All

*In 1942 Mahatma Gandhi had initiated the Quit India Movement. The sentiments of the then Indian people ran like this.

"India wants to be free and become the master of its destiny. Even the best of a foreign rule is no substitute for self-government. Freedom is our birthright. None dare deny us that for long. The British must quit and go home-their own homeland....."

**Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the President of the Indian National Congress that year.

sat down-hardly fifty or so-no loudspeakers, no hall, no chairs just the grassy grounds to sit on.

Pandit-ji managed to climb an uneven rock-and stood on the improvised rocky dais.

The sun was going down in the west. Bathed in its golden hues stood the national

hero ready to speak..... agleam and animated, as it were, by a vision sublime of the fulfilment of national aspirations.

What did he speak of ? A spirited demand for liberty, freedom absolute? No.

In full view of the great leader standing on the rock-I sat lost in my own reverie-No occasion however to express its pith and heart.

What did the man of the then day say? I fail to recall it all-verbatum. Memory playing tricks? Maybe. Now I am old enough to be in for that. What Jawaharlal Nehru said was of no consequence-had no meaning whatever at that time. At best a visionary enthusiast's dream trip..... a freedom fighter visioning India to be a free land..... whatever is.....

Thus spake the national hero :

"We are not aware.....I myself am hardly conscious of it though.....I do however hear rumblings..... world forces are on the move-are on the wings to free India from foreign domination.....

"Yes, India will be free..... will be liberated sooner than we can even imagine. Good things to come.....not easy to vision even.....are in the wind.....I myself am not yet certain though it is my feeling anyhow.....

"The British will quit.....they will go.....go to their homeland.....even if we, on our own, were to request them then not to....."'*

*All these years I have often thought of what Panditji divined or said in the twilight of that long-ago evening. Instead of seeking applause for himself or for other freedom fighters-he spoke of some unknown world- forces readying themselves for liberation of the land of Rama and Krishna. Above all-not a single word escaped his lips about best years of their lives spent in jails. Great indeed!

On the 6th of June 1947, the British did declare they would quit on the 15th of

August 1947.....And

they did..... The whole thing is part of history.

Friend! Let us compare notes. Did the words of Nehru have any meaning whatever? In the year 1945 could anybody dare believe that? Though mystified I myself did not. Not a few but many people of the then India not only felt but also said: "The British Raj is there to stay. It runs deep in our lives in the very blood that runs through our veins. A miracle indeed if God were to redeem hapless masses from misery.. ..."

The miracle did happen! It happened to give credence, as it were, to what Nehru said on that day. India got its rightful place in the sun, denied to it for long, long..... God is. God is great!

In the days to come may the Compassionate One help the downtrodden to act and live with dignity and human graces aplenty. May the Benevolent One bless some, if not all, to splash across the face of eternity a miracle of rare insight, unique splendour and an inspired lead.... OM! OM! OM !

Why meditation? In the dynamic moments of meditation and prayer our attitude towards life and its problems crystallizes into right thinking and right living.

VI-MAN AT THE CROSSROADS

MAN AT THE CROSSROADS

Friend! Imagine, or envision the little great man standing at the foot of a rock of infinite dimensions. Its infinite presence seems to be an eternal challenge to his spirit. Still, he has a good mind to carry it home. Though an impossible task on the face of it, he aspires to somehow do it.

Idea! Man, the tool maker, runs home to fashion a chisel and a hammer. Coming back, he starts chiselling the infinite rock chip by chip, chunk after chunk. And he carries home whatever is hewed. That is human effort.

Now God is infinite-beyond all limitations. According to the wise ones, He is unutterable, inconceivable, unknowable. Yet undeterred and determined man is out to conceive, to know and to comprehend Him. The human audacity? No, the wholesome human intent intent on a quest divine.

From time immemorial, man's mind and intellect-the human chisel and hammer-are at it. Whatever he conceives of the Inconceivable, he enunciates that as life's one truth or another-transcendental or otherwise. Despite the many truths and values conceived thus the Infinite Being still remains a challenge to the human mind and intellect. (Not an enigma but the supreme challenge.)

Often the human spirit groans as man stands baffled in his task of self-fulfilment and self-realization. Urged however by an intuitive sense of direction and destiny, he continues to aspire and strive to realize THAT, the Infinite Being. Lest he should get lost in the transient and come to grief, the inner voice adds helpfully: "Self-realization is being and becoming what one solemnly believes and lives too."

Once I was pondering the Truth Absolute and the purpose of being in response to the query of a young aspirant.

As I sat groping for the answer, the thoughts given above flashed before my mind with the spontaneity of a divine communication. At the end I found myself serenely collected.

I'am not sure whether it was the twilight of traditional wisdom, or the dawn of a new-born faith, but certainly it was the twilight of Time (Kaala), the fourth dimension of all beings and becomings. As I sat still, groping for more light, it came again: "The mind that has been the means so far is now the barrier. For God-realization transcend it and its phenomenon, the thought process (chitta-vritti)."

The flash did lead me on for a while but soon left me wondering at the crossroads as it were. As I blundered about in one direction or the other, into one belief or another, a voice whispered: "Speak of no whys or wherefores, only tell your seeker friend what the findings are. While explaining you might land him, yourself too, in greater confusion.

"Then there is a possibility of your friend arguing you out of the veracity of your findings. Your findings in that case will lose their sanctity and the power to convince."

The communication did not ring false.

Seeker! After a word or two more, I would leave it at that and depart: "Never mind the doubts and misgivings. For, they have a welcome edge-the spirit of query and quest.

"And if at any time you feel like having seen God, please know it is not the

Infinite

Being that you have seen but something created and finite. For, He is beyond all conceptions, ponderings and beliefs. That is to save you from disappointment at finding not any significant change in your life.'

While still in the sublime twilight of new-born belief I may add: "The basic test of truth is its power to convince and get itself accepted by the heart. Seek Him in the open forum of experience where all ideas and ideals must meet their test."

Knowing ignorance is strength. ignorance is strength. Ignoring knowledge is sickness."

MAN

The history of man is a story of one long drawn out battle fought by men of vision against their own destructive tendencies. Though in a minority, the disruptive elements hold to ransom the vast majority. Dharma initiates and equips an- other section of the populace with courage, faith and moral stamina that fights the battles of the hard-pressed majority to restore to it its lost sense of rhythm-SHANTIH.

The SHANTIH that the Vedas talk of and commend is a dynamic spiritual stance that helps man to grow and progress.

Man must not explain away his irrational behaviour by saying: "It is human to err." He should instead admit his mistakes and try to make amends in all earnestness.

MAN-A MIRACLE OF THE CREATION

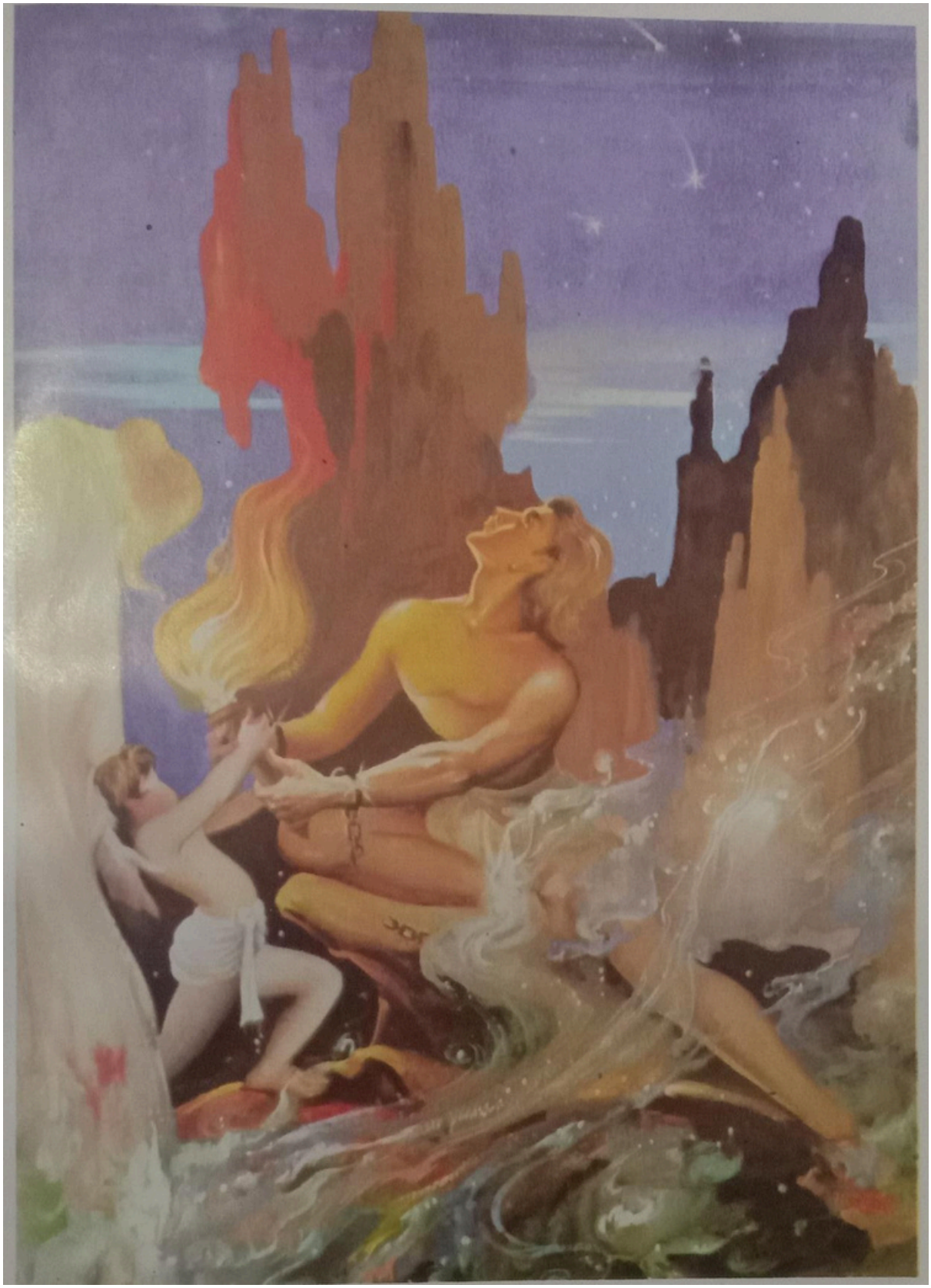
Now about man, a miracle of the Creation:

He stands exposed to the winds and weather, social and political events, individual and universal thought-currents. He finds himself speaking the

language, following the customs, accepting the faith, and priding himself upon the pride and prejudice of the people he belongs to. He has an inherent nature, certain inclinations, some specific trends and many an odd predilection. Transcending them all is the human spirit* that ceaselessly strives to draw out the best in him.

The story of man is the story of his striving and its urgent demand on his morale and stamina. His zest for life is supreme

The way of life, belief and behaviour that helps man to strive for self-expression, self-awareness and self-fulfilment on his way to self- realization is a higher value of life, a human value. It is called the human spirit when it is inherent in man and animates his thoughts and actions.



and he is not dismayed by the crippling limitations-human or any other. He ever strives to overcome them-transcend them even.

It is the greatest wonder of the world to see the small speck of a man striving to take the universe in three strides-Sat, Chit and Ananda. In the first stride-Sat-he wants to master life, defy change and defeat death. In the second stride-Chit-he aspires to know whatever is there to know. In the third stride-Ananda-he seeks the bliss that rises from the sense of self-fulfilment. He does not even stop at that but aspires to take not only himself but also the whole universe in his one single stride, Sat-Chit-Ananda-i.e., Satchitanand, the Supreme Being: He wants to realize God-the Ultimate Truth. It is a stupendous task but man is at it. Why not? Hasn't the whole of the universe gone into his making? There is something of everything in him.

Trying the impossible pushes the frontiers of the mind farther and broadens man's vision.

MAN ON THE MARCH

Man is before us at the moment. He is smiling, gentle and sweet. While on earth hard indeed is his lot. The why and wherefore of it is beyond his ken, he as yet knows not.

He found himself carrying a baby (if it were that life were a baby) and knew not whose baby it was. Before he knew it, a burden beyond his capacity was placed on his frail little shoulders to carry. What inner strength, what moral stamina and an indomitable courage, the little great man of ours must have had! Brave of him indeed to struggle against such heavy odds.

Soon after coming into being-wherein he had no choice either he found himself hemmed in on all sides by a high black wall. Try as he would, he could neither scale it, nor see what lay beyond it.

Thus it was that he found many an ominous streak of grief and grievance running across the woof and warp of the fabric of his life. Mystified he felt unhappy and often fell back sulking. An unknown foe, on the prowl, fearlessly stalked across his being, without being seen.

From the gloomy shadows of utter despondency of the spirit rose a flaming resolve-Sat, the will to live-that fanned out and entered his heart and soul and all that was he. A new flaming hope, a welcome triumph of the almighty man!

That and a new awareness dawned upon him and there was the upsurge of an unfamiliar strength of being and an enduring stamina of the spirit. This formidable wall that hemmed him in must go he felt determined and yelled aloud. Defiance was in his voice and in the very air that he breathed out. Life- the baby that he carried in his arms-got frightened, but he hugged it close and said: "Do not give way to fear. Courage! I will protect thee to the last."

He pondered-man pondered deep and told himself forth- right: "No confrontation. Find fulfilment in whatever is, and be free."
Behold! Man is on the march, measuring his strength at every step and weighing his capacity for meaningful aspirations and purposeful endeavour at every turn of life.

Man on the march? As he urges himself and solemnly surges forward, he gains in strength and his capacity (fa) finds a happy release from whatever holds it back.

He is not alone however. God is with him. A chance touch of His grace sends up his spine an exhilarating wave and he spells out: "Whosoever you are and whatever you be, play not hide and seek with me.

Finding no answer forthcoming, he holds aloft the baby- now his very own life- and calls out in desperation: "Now that I am in for it, I must make the most of the situation I find myself in. O, Ye Unknown! Pray, judge me not, nor stand aloof. Help."

Hark! Sudden resounding reverberations? Look! A dazzling flash is around.
Behold! Man is aquiver and afire and his solemn aspirations are rushing forward to find fulfilment in ANANTA (अनतुं)-THAT WHICH is as yet not and is yet to be.

Ah! At long last man is at peace. Oh! The bliss of it. There! Behold! He is dancing his way on to Him, singing: "OM! TAT! SAT! OM! OM! TAT! SAT! OM! THAT WAS! THAT IS! THAT WILL BE, WILL BE..."

Aspirant! Man, as we know him, has four dimensions: Sat, Chit, Ananda and Moksha.
(i) Sat, as a human worth, is the will to live and to live well-even if one has to struggle hard.
As a higher value, it is to get over the fear of death and to aspire for immortality, ultimately whatever that might turn out to be.

(ii) Chit, as a human worth, is to know, to cognize. As a higher value it is to aspire to know THAT, by knowing Whom one knows all. (iii) Ananda, as a human worth, is gladness of heart, the joy that exhilarates. It urges man to avoid pain.

As a higher value of life, it is comfort-that which flows naturally from the sense of self-fulfilment.

(iv) Moksha is as yet a dark horse in the field of human aspirations. As a higher value of life, it is 'the bridge that man will have to throw across the eternity of existence to reach the Ultimate Satchitananda-your Lord, my Hope, and the Liberator of all.

Why non-violence? For, when violenceerupts it respects no personage, values no truths and spares not even the human splendour.

IT'S THEMARCHTHAT MATTERS

"Nathji, don't you think thatmanissuperb and fascinating, even in his failings? In his degradation, sometimes,helaysafoundation, solid and sure, for a mighty edifice of a character, uniqueandrare.He is always building, never demolishing. Even when he demolishes,itistobuildanew and build better. Oh, the strength and tenacity of this mightyfrailcreature. He knows no defeat, however heavy the odds. He marchesonandforward.

"Does he know where?Perhapsnot.Some have felt that he marches God-ward. Others are scepticalabouthisverymarch and its destination. But does the destination matter?Isn'titthemarchthat matters? The march is certainly fascinating; look atitfromanyangle.What does it matter if he is a mystery to himself. Rob the manofwhatmystifiesand the charm is gone. I am sure, man would not like it eitherandwouldwalkaway in disgust-I know not whereto."

THATIAM-MANS BATTLE CRY

Seeker! Man is born withawillandthe vision to improve upon what is. He bestirs himself to ceaselesseffortwhenever and wherever a chance arises for betterment. Since time immemorialhehas been in quest of the Unattainable, the Infinite One.

If nothing else this quest inspires man to nobility of character and gives him a deep sense of responsibility. It helps him not only to endure and progress but also to distinguish, exalt, transcend and strive for self-fulfilment.

Again, man struggles against the forces of Nature, undaunted, undeterred. Ever bustling about restlessly and roaring

* Excerpts i.cm Principal Bhatia's letter.

like a mountain stream, he rushes forward. Excelsior! Looking disdainfully at small achievements, he does not hesitate to strive against himself even. Excelsior!

The obstacles that cripple endeavour, thwart ambition and dampen spirits call man's attention to the miracle of the spirit of adventure, faith and hope. Failures do give a jolt to his sense of self-complacency and he strives with a remarkable fervour and greater vigour.

Success at best is a joyous experience, but the joy is short- lived. Soon man begins to miss the invigorating feel of Titiksha* and is unhappy. He feels like a sportsman who had been called away while the play is still on.

Did you ever see such utter audacity? He disregards even what the worldly wise men counsel: "Beware! You are but a small speck in God's universe; dare a little less." Who cares, however...for he has already accepted the challenge of life and nature and has declared manfully: "THAT I AM! AHAM BRAHMA ASMI."

I blame him not, for I, too, so often hear the great masters say: "TAT TVAM ASI...THAT THOU ART." It seems he has faith in their words and not in the mandate of his detractors. For I hear his words echo and re-echo in my heart: "THAT I AM! OM TAT SAT OM! तत् ्सत् ्ॐ

"What the gentleman demands in himself, the lesser man demands in others."

• The opposite of inertia.

NO KNOWING WHAT MAN IS CAPABLE OF

All that man aspires for and looks up to is there. It has always been so. Nothing needs be created new, for it is inherent in him. All that he has to do is to help it step forth after securing its release from within.

Man has the heart, the mind and his speech. He has feelings, thoughts and words. A word? Like a knife of the carver, a brush of the artist, and the chisel of

a sculptor, it secures the release of an idea from the mind and assures the freedom of an emotion from the heart.

When spoken the word becomes sound. This sound has a meaning and a purpose, and it builds bridges in all directions.

When somebody expresses his feelings through words, they become a living force. By giving them the force of his thought, emotion and faith he makes them live for ages, even if not for ever.

Man is great! He is a miracle of his own soul-force and that of Nature's creativity. He has accepted the challenge of human limitations and is always ready to elbow his way through improbabilities on to the most Probable One. The life is constantly on the run-not running away from its responsibilities but running about to condition man to meet the challenge of the Ultimate.

Behold! How deftly our man splashes the colours of his everyday personality and those of his true identity on the face of eternity? The colours so splashed are forming themselves into the pictures of life, its higher values and those of higher aspirations. Whether ugly, indifferent or beautiful, they are always exclusive and unique.

Friend! Man is striving to make his life on earth livable and lovable by unravelling the beauty of its purpose and value.

No knowing what man, the carver of his own destiny, would accomplish if God were to give him better tools and greater power to promote merit, vision and glory-in whatever he does.

MAN'S LIFE A PARADOX AND A CRISIS

Man and his life :

Man's life on earth is at once a paradox and a crisis. I leave it to you to figure him out as you like.

Man and the atmospheric pressure:

As every student of science knows there is an enormous atmospheric pressure (14.72 lbs per square inch) that tries to pin man down but is successfully balanced by a small quantity of air inside the body. Despite the staggering weight and its tremendous stress and strain, man moves about light and free.

Though strange but not stranger than the fact that the seemingly insignificant faith in man's heart keeps his spirits high against heavy odds. Inspired by it, man accepts the challenge of an unkind life, a hostile universe and an exacting Providence. This faith is precious and is the essence of man's being. Experience it to know it by questing inward.

Man and the universe :

The science of astrology tells us that man not only comes under an influence of the stars the moment he comes into being, but also remains under their spell till he departs. A new birth, a new set of stars then to see him through his life after death. They give him an inherent nature, particular inclinations and specific trends, but leave him enough room to choose his way of life.

Again, according to the Law of Karma, man's actions (karmas)-whether good, bad or indifferent-not only deter-mine his present life but also control, to a large extent,* his future destiny. That is why he is always anxious about the nature of his deeds.

That should not however dishearten you. For, here is what a wise man once said: "Thou thinkest thou art but a small thing whereas in thee is involved the whole universe." I do agree with the wise saying and would like to add : "Fired by a strong

• Not fully because of other factors also being involved therein.

sense of responsibility, face the future with courage,*1 faith*2 and hope*3. If the wise and the enlightened were not to get themselves involved in life, others will make a mess of the whole thing."

Man and love:

Love is! It is both instinctive and intuitive. However, at times, it becomes mystic, divine too. For, though it is essentially human, its theme is divinity. Man's eternal quest for God is its ample proof. (Love of man, when sublimated, becomes love of God.)

A myth? No, never. Love is! It is eternally true and is of universal relevance. It reveals new dimensions of the human spirit and inspires man to high thinking and noble living.

Life without love is bleak, a howling wilderness. Man feels lost and lonely. Without love life loses its buoyancy of spirit and a painful feeling of emptiness

sets in, which gnaws at the tendrils of his heart and gives him a sadistic bent of mind.

In everyday life love manifests itself beautifully as the art of living and to our lives it gives a new sense of divine destiny. The harrowing drift comes to an end and man finds himself fired by an urge to quest, quest and quest. ...

Man and art:

Art, like life, creates nothing, it only reveals. At its worst, it conceals more than what it reveals. At its best, it transcends itself and reveals all.
Seeker! There is beauty in everything. There is love in every heart. There is God in everything and in every being. He is! The true art is to reveal beauty, love and the Lord.

Reveal beauty in what you do. Do handsome deeds. Reveal love in love of life and love of God. Love all. Reveal art in your loftiest aspiration: the art of right thinking and right living that inspires man on to the path of God-realization.

* 1 Courage to accept the challenge of a predetermined destiny and to blaze new trails. 2 Faith in one's own ability and vision to mould one's life. * 3 Hope to achieve the Highest End by transcending all that is unmanlike.
Neither grudge, nor grumble. Condemn not, nor merely find faults. Love all as yourself. Know when and where to stop.

Despite compulsions man has a strong sense of belonging. Take a hint and join the mainstream of life to build a brave new world wherein none need sin, nor need tell a lie for comfort.

A LETTER

Bhiwani (India)

May 4, 1974.

Dear Nathji,

In your writings I frequently came across the view that "man is coming into his own". With due deference to the deep and broad acquaintance with life that you have, the phrase "man coming into his own" gave me an uneasy feeling. I wonder if this is the view of the yogi within you or that of a utopian dreamer and an incorrigible optimist who would refuse to see the naked realities of life

around. If it reflects the considered view of a yogi then it is different, but if it is the other way round, it is likely to sanctify the modern trend towards anarchy. Whatever be the reason, it is clear that you have been led to use the phrase, "man coming into his own" due to heightened sense of self-awareness evinced by the youth in revolt all over the world. I duly subscribe to the view that heightened self-awareness is the goal of spiritual evolution and that of life. But the important question is, what is the concept of self before man? If the concept of self itself happens to be debased, heightened self-awareness is not likely to lead man to the destined goal, that is, Moksha. There is considerable evidence around to show that concept of self in the present day world has suffered a serious setback. The spirit of rebellion evinced by the angry youth today is perhaps the other reason which has led you to use the phrase referred to above. I am not opposed to the spirit of rebellion as such. It is certainly the essence of being human. Without it man would not be man. Milton in 'Paradise Lost' has immortalised his own inner revolt, in the character of Satan, against the Christian dogma to which he was wedded by virtue of his up-bringing.

Shelley even went to the extent of saying that Satan as a moral being was far superior to his God because of the fortitude which he showed in the face of suffering hurled at him by an unjust God; and all this because of the courage of his convictions. William Hazellit too believed that Satan did not stand for the principle of malignity as such, his malignity was not the motiveless malignity of an Iago (Iago is a Shakespearean character in Othello). But his malignity was directed against something which he honestly believed to be wrong. To act evil, even Satan had to tell himself, "Evil be thou my good."

When somebody rebels he seeks change. Things as they are fail to satisfy.

Change in itself is neutral, neither good nor bad. Some abhor change, others are always itching for it. The attitude of both is irrational. What matters most is the direction of change. Is the revolt of the angry youth-of-today, out to demolish what 'is', directed towards something worth- while and significant? If it is, I have no quarrel with you. If their concept of self is not wedded to Eternal Verities of life it cannot possibly be directed towards something worthwhile. I think this is enough for the day. I have dictated this to L. ... as somebody is reciting from the Holy Book in the next room. I can concentrate no more.

Sincerely,

Bhatia.

HERE IS YOUR MAN

Friend, here is your man. He is human, a human being. To feel and to respond to one impulse or another is his nature. One desire or another, one motive or another, prompts him and gets him going. That is what he is: raw, unwrought- ready to be moulded in any form. He may cast himself in a heroic and a noble mould, or in some despicable and an obscure one. It is up to him.

Man is easily excited and is likely to be moved by some sudden impulse. He is hemmed in by deep-rooted desires and is constantly resisting the temptation to succumb to them. To gratify his sense-desires and to lust for sensual pleasures has become his second nature.

Watch, please. Do not be taken in by his casual manner. He is always goading himself to attain what he covets or cherishes. Even if he fails, he goes on brooding, waiting for a time to come when he shall fulfil his long cherished desires.

Here! He is always planning and preparing himself to go into action. He is ready to strive for whatever comes to his mind. It is not easy to shake his determination.

What's it? Despite setbacks, he is not flurried but is persevering. He is adamant and is bent upon struggling. Behold, there he is, ready to do what his Dharma or any other command that he has accepted gladly, demands. Lest you should at any time blame me, I may tell you that he is not always an angel, nor is he always a man of good intentions. So often he becomes haughty, caring little for the feelings of others. Alas, sometimes he does not even know the difference between the sense of self-respect and a sense of pride and prejudice.

Incorrigible that he is, so often he begins to feel resentful and envious. Full of hate and carried away by malicious intentions, he starts nursing a grudge against one person or another. That is bad indeed. He should not stoop so low- pray, tell him that. Sometimes, so very conceited and brutal he turns out to be that you find it difficult to aceept him as your very own. No use telling him then to behave and be man- like. Nothing short of a whack of Pralaya or God's wrath can make him see reason, Please do not get upset over it- for he shall have to answer for every bit of his iniquity. Nature never forgives, nor does God ever forget man's indiscretions.

Now; does it behove him to pretend piety? He is out to present a false image of himself, intent on deceiving others. Even though exposed, he is pleading innocence. Shame.

Leave him alone and come away. Certainly your man is not living up to your expectations. Instead of pleading guilty, he has the audacity to say that there is something fundamentally wrong with the Creation. He is not sorry but goes on indulging in sensual pleasures. What a shame! He has brainwashed himself to such an extent that he has begun to believe that the Creation is there to slave for his recreation only. He is a limit.

Despite hard knocks given by the whack of Pralaya, he is not seeing reason nor coming round. I think he lacks courage to face the truths of life. Again it is your man and no one else: Despite having enough to last him his lifetime, he is out to grab more and more. The demon of greed seems to have entered his soul. Even that is not all of him, he is always after sensual pleasures and it has become a way of life with him.

To have ambitions is not so bad, to become crazy about them is however unwholesome.

There seems to be something wrong somewhere. Instead of grappling with the problems of life realistically, man often lives in a fool's paradise-a make-believe world of his own creation.

Despite provocations why doesn't your friend, the man, speak out? Lo, he has at last broken into conversation. But he is not talking sense. He is talking only for the love of talking. Please stop him. To express himself irresponsibly will only complicate matters. Let him sit down, ponder deep and meditate truly and meaningfully and then speak out responsibly and purposefully.

That's fine. Now our friend's behaviour is sensible. He is a man of vision, merit, wit and charm. Whatever he says does make some sense. Some of the thoughts expressed by him are really sublime, worth pondering over. Ah,...what a sea change! I feel like congratulating him for the sublimity of his views expressed. The animal-in-every-man has at last been humanized.

Our friend is already in a state of trance-A divine glow is on his face. And he is mumbling something or another. It inspires awe and reverence. The vision of life seems to have worked a miracle. After all our friend, the man, is not altogether a bad man. He has a sense of destiny and is intrinsically human and right.

Now a definitechangehastakenplaceinhisdisposition.Hislifeisvibratingwith an unknownsuper-vitality.Thesoul-force?Likely.Heisinvoiceandismindful of the ultimatehumandestiny-sublimeanddivine.MayGodblesshim!

Behold! Yourmaniswalkingasifonair.Theknowingsmile,theheavenlyglow, and the inspiredlooks-whatasublimeshowhemakesofhimselfashewalks with God andtalkstoHim.

Hush...sh...!Silence!Tiptoeout.Manislostintranscendentalreverie.Ishe?He is in a stateofSamadhii.e.,inastateofcreativepause-thatiswhatisworkinga sea changeinhim.Oh,themiracleofit.Itinitiates,createsanddevelopsawhole world of highervaluesandnoblertruthsoflife.Theypullourmanoutofthe morass-thathehasbeencreatingaroundhimself.Behold!Heisnowsurging forward totaketomeaningfulthoughts,purposefulendeavourandsolemn prayers-for being blessed by the Compassionate One.

Ah, the manthatwas.Oh,themanthatis.MayGodblessthemantobe.Inmy heart I havealreadybeguntofeelthethrillofhispresencesublime.Heseems to have transcendedwhathehadbeenandisnowreadytotakeoffatatangent to far off lokas...thehigherplanesofconsciousness.

If we ourselvesaregiventomalicewhileeradicatingevil,wemightaswell become as irrationalandinhumaninourbehaviourasisthepersonwhoviolates human graces anddoesdeliberatelydowrong.

DHARMA - A DRIVE FOR

WHOLESOME GROWTH

तोऽभ्ुि्युियनः शे्रिससससद्धध स धमःय ।।

I,i,2) (वैशेप्रषकिशनयम् ्

Nothing could be of greater merit, worth and value than Dharma. Dharmaisa human value par excellence and is an integrated, wholesome drive for a healthy physical, mental, moral, social and spiritual growth at all conceivable levels.

Urged by life's inherent need for greater self-expression and fuller (पूण)य self-fulfilment, man strives endlessly to progress and prevail at all levels. The way of life, belief and behaviour that helps him to achieve this end is a higher value of life, a vital dimension of man's life on earth. Though human, it is afire with the

divine spirit and its potential is great. Lives of the great men, godmen and the prophets show what difference does it make when man lives up to it.

From time immemorial, man has been out to initiate, create or evolve human values in all spheres of life for better living. By now he has a whole world of them to provoke, guide and inspire sublime thoughts and meritorious deeds. These miraculous factors of life (hetu, हेतु) cover the entire field of human behaviour. And in them is reflected man's undying determination to go on living creatively, progressing ever.

Remarkable indeed is the miracle of human values-the tenets of Dharma-that spark man's days with aspirations sublime and fill his nights with hallowed dreams of a blissful re-union! They amply reward him for any privation that he might have to undergo with joy of living, joy's growing meaning and its expanding frontiers. Man prizes them the most as a precious human heritage of universal relevance, and prides himself upon having initiated them.

Inspired by the achievements of human values, man has made them the prime basis of his personal faith that he lives by. He couldn't possibly appreciate them better.

even a wee bit of

Again, life is a growing process. Because its circumstances ever change, there is no finality about it. But that doesn't stagger the man off his feet nor takes away his zest for life. He rises like a storm* to meet the challenge of its-life's-changing patterns. Whatever the handicaps, limitations and the risks involved, man keeps pace with the growing process of life by living the higher values of life as best he can. That is what makes him a distinguished dimension of the Creation (ashruf-ul-makhlukaat). For he knows it to his cost that failure on his part would spell ruin-he will become irrational, rash and brute, in spite of himself.

Seeker! You are unique. As an individual you are what nobody else is. Your problems are also unique. These are human problems however-no abstractions. To solve them human touch is essential. And you have got to initiate, create and develop or evolve many a new hetu (हेतु, ु a vital factor of life) that will have the potential to meet the challenge that any

Like an eternity of storms in the universe there is the eternity of storms in

human

affairs also.

one of them might pose if left unsolved. It is because of this that the Rig Veda commends: मा नो भद्राः क्रतवो ि न्तु प्रवश्वतः ।।

"Let noble thoughts come to us from every side."

(Rig Veda I-89-i)

Come on, sir. Be man enough to accept the challenge of life's inherent urge for greater self-expression and fuller (पूण)य self-fulfilment and take a vow to follow the dictates of Dharma in all solemnity. Meditation opens wide the doors of perception and leads man to the very
threshold of spiritual experiences. It helps him to transcend the mind and gives him a creative, purposeful and enduring pause. From this vital pause rises the awareness of destiny divine that man must one day fulfil.

MAN SHALL NOT PERISH

Behold! Life is a growing process. There is no finality about it. How can then man stay stuck for long? Fired by the human spirit and impelled by an as yet unidentified urge, he strives for self-expression, self-fulfilment. Whatever the cost, he rises to the occasion whenever a crisis of commitment or confidence demands: "Awake! Arise! No let up; ahead!"

Man wants, also aspires, to be free. The freedom of choice,. expression and action is what makes him truly human. Habits or no habits, beliefs or no beliefs--he aspires to cut across them all to be and live manlike. No giving up of human stance, no demolishing of what God made so sublime, so unique-he strives ever to grow to full human stature. What- ever thwarts, stunts or dwarfs-no, not for him.

As he grows, he finds it rather difficult to be a slave to ideas, beliefs, faiths even. He wants to have an open mind- ready to respond to whatever is good or right. Call him an atheist or a rebel, he cannot help being human-because he is a human being. He might err and he does often err. But that gives you no right to rob him of his right to differ-to choose and determine.

A cartman has the bullocks-in-yoke to draw his cart. Man has the human spirit* and the yoga* way of life to draw upon. Thwarting of human progress-on any plane, in any field and at any level--angers him and he rebels.... That brings me to the spirit rebellious, an angry young man--not of today alone but of all ages. At no time, in the history of man, an angry young man was not there. Time and

time again, he rises like a storm to change the outdated manner and mode of man's living. He revolts, provokes rebellions and angrily seeks reforms. Fighting injustice and to re-establish the rule of law falls invariably to his lot.

Friend! While others hem and haw and merely grumble, the spirit rebellious alone heeds the Call. Fired by it, man initiates, creates and develops new ways of life, new faiths even, to fall back upon. The imposters, the shams, the irresponsible lot? They are there in both camps-for and against a change and the dissent.

Personally I believe that the modern young man is not wholly at fault. Given a sympathetic hearing, and treated with love and understanding, he will listen to you and behave responsibly-in expression, thought and action.

Frankly speaking, man in revolt is fed up with the institution of senseless authority, the very idea of it. It starts with creating fear in his heart and ends up with demoralization- even dehumanization. That is what angers the spirit rebellious within, and man becomes irrational and takes to violence not only against others but also against himself. How can a man of the human era allow himself to be unmanned, dehumanized? It is high time we gave up demanding an abject obedience from him. We should help him instead to sublimate and humanize whatever is low and unmanlike in him.

"Man is born unto trouble" is a thing of the past. Now man wants to live in comfort and bliss. He has already waited long enough for the promised blissful heavens. No more carrot and the mule game with him.

* The human spirit is an urge to strive for self-expression, self-fulfil- ment and much more. ** Yoga way of life is to take the right initiative and to endeavour aright for self-realization.

Alas, religiosity's* dehumanized priesthood cares little to help man to become truly human and stay so. In the garb of saviours and the champions of human rights, they exploit him for their own benefit and bliss. Noble exceptions are of course always there-and they do count and command respect, despite the opposition by some irresponsible persons of false scientific temper.

Even in the field of education, man is not left alone. The humanities are slighted but the same are extolled when presented as secular** sciences. Because of it-disgusted, disgruntled and given to despondency, sometimes man revolts violently against reason, good sense even. Any sense in making a robbot out of him?

It is wrong to suggest that the irrepressible modern youth is out to violate human graces and destroy man's institutions. On the contrary, impelled by the human spirit, he wants to keep up dignity and desires an effective involvement in human affairs. It is only when he is scoffed at and is denied the opportunity that he "snarls", threatens and becomes irrational.

Friend! Stop creating a false sense of discipline and push him not around, nor aside-For, though yet in the making he has already come a long way on the road to self-fulfilment.

All said and done, I cannot help saying: "Save man to save God." Maybe it's a voice of despair, maybe not. It is the voice of man all right. Unless allowed to live with honour and as decent human beings, more and more people will start denying God and will take to a violent way of life.

Friend! God needs man-men with manly determination. For, His task is not yet done. Then man is young as yet, not
Religiosity in the sense: not religion but an affectation of it. Man trying to govern man is against the human spirit but time is not yet when he can do without any
government. A word about secularism. The idea is good and is born of our aversion to religious strife.
To make it a positive force it is essential that we should help people to become better human beings.
As a negative virtue it is bound to fail and will make matters worse.
It is time we made secularism meaningful and purposeful by valuing the higher truths of life and
showing respect to all the religions of the world.
come of age. In no case is he old enough to quit the scene. The universe of the space age needs his miraculous touch-so much to be initiated, created, developed and harnessed for human well-being by his scientific temper. As well so much is still to be discovered by his spiritual temper for man's progress of universal relevance.

Again, man is a miracle of the Creation and is born of many a crisis of nature's creativity and his own sense of destiny. Though rooted in his environment, he is on his way to branch out in the eternity of the phenomenal world. He has in fact already transcended his gods-both in the heaven above and here on earth. Believe it or not, he hopes to transcend himself even, one day.

Last! Angry young man of the age! Do not lose heart. It does not behove you to despond or give way to anger. I need you. You do matter. You do matter. Then I am no prophet but you are. For, in you many an element of higher life is coming

in- to being that shall go into the making of a future messiah. Keep up higher standards of morality, sublimate anger* and be readily available to serve mankind selflessly.

A great many wise men of yesteryears talked of this prophet or that god in consonance with the wisdom of their age-while all the time, God, the Incomprehensible, kept on challenging attention and staggering their intellect.

Friends! Future prophets will talk of man and man alone. They themselves, in their turn, will rise bit by bit from many a crisis (of human understanding) that men face in their everyday quest for true vocation and an abiding faith. To usher in the ultimate man, these bits will spark higher truths of life and the transcendental human values**.

Anger when sublimated urges man to act responsibly and serve selflessly. It is then KSHAMA (क्षमा), one of the Yamas (यम) of the Eight- fold Path of Yoga.

Along with worshipping unequivocally the Ultimate One and Only, it will be good if men were allowed to show deference to the gods born of their own higher aspirations. It will not make them renegades or atheists but shall instead help them to understand the Ultimate Truth better. Their growth will also be healthier at the intellectual, moral and spiritual levels.

They have, all the same, been and are even now doing it-whether anybody likes it or not. Be it hero worship or turning to hallowed men and women-it is in response to this very urge for seeing God in human form.

Here! Though humanity is in the throes of a crisis of its own destiny, it is ready to turn the corner. Look ahead. And be assured that even from your day-dreamings will crystallize- if not interfered with-the wisdom of the age to come. The essence of change is a crisis. This eternal process of change and crisis is the phenomenon of creation and growth.

Man shall not perish. He has a future and is for ever. May God bless him.

The essence of the universe is change.

प्रवश्व पररवतनयशील है । पररवतनय इस का स्वभाव हैं

A LETTER

Dear friend,

Maybe, you are but I am not against blind faith.

A blind corner might endanger life. A blind alley offers little hope of further progress. Blind apathy hits man below the belt and he wails with pain. Blind stupor does take away the vigour of life. But blind faith is different: It helps life whenever it is in the throes of a blind crisis.

I would any day trust, even die for, my belief in the blind faith. I do believe in its hidden power: Whenever everything else fails, it comes to my rescue. It rises like a mountain high wave and carries me on its crest on to the safety of the kindly shores. Can't explain the why and wherefore of it.
However, whenever the blind faith tries to blindfold me to the higher values of life I would certainly not then let myself blindly accept its authority. The other day I was against any-body having blind faith.

In fact, I wanted to be blind to a friend's idle queries and quibbles and didn't want him to make my faith a subject of discussion.

Man is! Faith is! God is!

Nath.

Don't say don't till you can say what to do instead. A life is lopsided if it extols only the don'ts and shies away from a positive approach. From underneath our feet it takes away the plank that we stand on-leaving us dangling precariously in the air.

A FRANK WORD WITH MAN

Today, while having a word with you, my dear man, I will be drawing heavily on the views expressed by others. The stakes are rather heavy for me to have any compunction:

Were you never told that tendencies toward hatred must be contained in the formative years? Not that you cannot do it later. How about now? Some people hate and take to violence because of a feeling that life has cheated them or has passed them by. In truth the boot is on the other leg.
Prevalence of hate is due to man's failure to fulfil all the demands that he makes on himself, even if his demand on others had been met with creditably. May God help him if he happens to be a child of poverty-not in terms of money alone but also in terms of true education. In that case he might as well blame the world for his own shortcomings. That is too bad a situation and must be taken care of.

Why don't you, my dear sir, advise man to have fewer desires and learn to sublimate the unruly ones? Send him on to me and I'll tell him that he is not a mere phenomenon of nature, but is a child of destiny-nor is he a child of fear or tyranny, but is a child of love and grace. He should look up and aspire to lead a balanced life.

Balanced life? It is brought about by human forces that are very much there as love, love of life, love of all the living beings and a strong sense of destiny divine. That will not let him degenerate into something other than a human being, but will help him to live with dignity--both human and divine.

My dear friend! Authority of religion and not of religiosity is to be respected and deeply too. Not an authority of the socalled men of religion who dominate through hate or fear, nor an authority of the unaware and unwise self-seeking per- sons--but that which an enlightened, responsible and God- fearing society creates for the good of all and that which is always subject to rational and humane control. Eternal vigilance and no let up by the people who follow the tenets of Dharma in all solemnity. The sacred writings can be misinterpretted with impunity, but the seers can always come forward to correct the wrong impression so created.

Hereby I wish man to do something about the seed of his own destruction that he carries. The sooner he realizes the truth of it, the better it is. He must look into and tackle the crisis brought about by the "hidden process which underlies the destructiveness hanging over the age." Instead of saying something myself, I will let E. Burke warn: "All that is necessary for the forces of evil to win in the world is for enough good men to do nothing."

Didn't I say that man has come of age? Am I not now trying to run him down and agreeing with what Mark Twain once remarked* satirically? No, sir. I am only cautioning him against his own inordinate desires and hostile tendencies-like avarice, anger, hate, wanton indulgence and a bloated ego. He must not try to explain away his own irrational behaviour by saying: "It is human to err." Let him instead say: "It is human to be truly a man and to be unmanlike is just an accident."

I don't mind poverty, apathy or injustice, but never never their tyranny.

* Here is what he said: "All that I care to know is that a man is a human being-that is enough for me; he can't be any worse."

A WORD OF CHEER

Friend! Man is out to transcend himself even, and start a new era in the history of evolution. The next-to-man is, in fact, already going through the birth pangs and it is his growing dimensions that often mystify the mystics and appear to them in the form of one vision or another.

Till such time as the man-to-be finally transcends both the life-animus and the human-potential and is born as an altogether different phenomenon of life-man will have to carry the burden of his own existence and that of the next-to-man.

Just as, at one time, man was in the process of being evolved from the life-animus, the next-to-man is in the process of being evolved from man (Homo Sapeins). In man's case it was the human potential that he evolved from, the next-to-man is gradually evolving from "the divinity of man"- whatever it may then turn out to be.

The Hindu seers realized this truth and they named those men, in whom the new process of evolution was perceptible, as Dvijah (द्प्रवजः:), the twice-born. To the wise and the initiated it meant a greater sense of responsibility and respectability, but to the irresponsible, uninitiated and the lustful it meant a licence to take airs and start thinking in terms of being superior to others. While the former aspired to simple living and high thinking, the latter took pride, delight, as well, in tyranizing over others to establish their supremacy.

Aspirant! The next-to-man having come into being is already trying to make his presence felt. That accounts for the unearthly restlessness which often grips the minds of the elect. What the next-to-man would look like, it is as yet too early to surmise. In days gone by, the enlightened ones thought of him as a god, but the non-elect imagined him to be a giant.

The gods of yesteryears have crystallized themselves into God, the One and only, and the giants of the olden days have taken the form of pitiless supermen in the minds of those who lust for power.

Maybe, the next-to-man is already in existence on some other planet. Ours is but one, there are many more.

In man are inherent and in his life are involved Sat, Chit and Ananda, the three dimensions of life. He is ever giving them a new direction and is always adding new dimensions to the meaning and the purpose of each one of them. Even a

casual look at man's world will signify phenomenal growth in all spheres and at all levels.

VII-VISION OF A DYNAMIC FAITH

AND A LIVING TRADITION

Dear friend, Early history of all the faiths shows how a great prophet inspires and animates
his followers to a spirit of supreme sacrifice, surprising zeal and deeds of extraordinary valour. He gives a new dimension to the converts' lives and they accomplish what they could never otherwise achieve.

Unknown to them-in their hearts is liberated a new faith which sparks a miraculous revolution in the lives of ordinary men, women and children around. Their lives become dynamic, holy and great. Fired by the dynamics of this newly liberated faith, they (the faithful) give a new direction to the human mind and change the course of history. The faith in its nascent state is Flaming Faith-It is

prajna (प्रज्ञा), pratibha (प्रयतभा),

jnana (, ज्ञान gyaana) all rolled into one.

Sincerely,

Nath

JNANA THE FLAMING FAITH

Aspirant! Sometimes a spiritual experience liberates a new faith in the human breast. While still in the act of being liberated, the new faith is in its nascent* state. In its nascent state, its dynamism is phenomenal. Let me call this phenomenon as Flaming Faith-the Jnana that every Hindu dreams of, aspires after and lives for.

The Flaming Faith is profound, deep and dynamic and has inherent in it a greater spiritual drive than the faith already in the heart. It illumines. It exalts man morally and spiritually. It unravels not only life's higher truths and values but also the Truth Absolute. When full of it man aspires to talk to God and walk with Him.

The dynamics of Jnana-the faith in its nascent state- helps man to realize the truth of Maya-the ever changing aspect of whatever is. Once this realization dawns upon him, he is afraid of neither change, nor decay, nor death. He welcomes them all as the vital essentials of life's growing process. Lest there should be any misgivings, no running away from life it is. The man of Flaming

Faith instead sets himself intent on living fully-with added zeal and deeper and all- embracing involvement.

Such is the dynamics of faith in its nascent state that man's habits, behaviour, demeanour even-undergo a sea of change. He is animated with spiritual ardour and moral fervour that give to his aspirations a new dimension and a new direction. Coming events cast their shadows before his mind's eye and clairvoyance makes its presence felt in everyday life. There is a change at physical level too. Though subtle, it is pronounced. To meet the growing demands of the spiritually awakened human psyche-the mind, the intellect and the self-all the senses grow in stature and begin to function better. That releases psychic and spiritual energy which helps the growing process of life at all levels and slows down degeneration and decay. Man feels superb-lively and sprightly in body, mind and the spirit.

Animated by Flaming Faith, the human mind taps its own hidden potential. What that brings to man only the life of a realized person can express or show. No words are adequate, but a man of vision may be able to glimpse the splendour of the higher mind.

Apparently a person remains the same but there is a miraculous change in his life. But for a few, it is hard for many many to comprehend the phenomenal spiritual upliftment of man in terms of viveka and deeper understanding. In him the uprush of psychic powers is spontaneous-it startles the uninitiated, and awe-struck they flock to the saint for blessings.

It's a real treat to meet a person like that, and it is a joyous experience. The change is remarkable. It startles man in the act of doing some wrong and animates his conscience to raise its voice in protest-far too strong to ignore.

Like his destiny man is also remade. In him a new man is born. He works selflessly
and devotedly lives his life. At the time of a crisis he rises to the occasion and faces its challenge with equanimity and courage. That fires him with heavenly beliefs that demolish fallacies, doubts and misgivings.

There is another welcome change in a man of Flaming Faith-the Jnana. Inspired by the new-found faith, he confronts life with courage, faith and hope. To face the hardships that this new way of life might entail becomes his way of life till he is at peace with himself and the world outside.

On the physical plane, man eats just enough and from what he eats he derives greater stamina. He sleeps light, but what little sleep he gets is enough for proper relaxation. All this and much more becomes possible because of the opening up and functioning of subtle psychic-centres (चक्रों, chakras). (No time now to deal at length with this phenomenon.)

Behold! Animated by Flaming Faith and fired by what it liberates man beams with bliss and sparks smiles and joys. He begets himself yoga-vibhutis (ाग-प्रवभूयता)ँ-the supernatural powers that not only help the afflicted and the sick

but also give them a sense of destiny and hope. His touch soothes and his presence works miracles.

A small digression; hope you will not mind. Sometimes a spiritual experience brings about a strange phenomenon to take place in the life of a man of Flaming Faith. Though quite healthy otherwise, he suddenly develops symptoms of an ailment. Don't be in a hurry to drug him, for the ailment is only symptomatic. The sage is not physically ill. Someone, who happens to be within the 'range' of his spiritual aura, is suffering from that very disease. The symptoms of that person's ailment are being "reflected" in the unconscious of the revered man. That is all. Such a person is seldom conscious of the occurrence of a spiritual phenomenon like that. But that does not alter the truth of it.

All this and much more happens when a transcendental spiritual experience liberates faith in its nascent state in an aspirant's heart. The Flaming Faith so liberated is in its own right a miraculous spiritual phenomenon. It strikes the man like Pralaya, scorches the ungodly in him and leaves him chastened, spiritually wide-awake and full of creative fervour. The man so blessed has the courage of his convictions and starts living godlike.

Truly speaking, the Flaming Faith is no faith as the word faith is normally understood. Nor is it an article of faith of one assortment or another. It's what man experiences when he is spiritually awake. In it there is what goes to make a saint, a prophet even.

Last! The Flaming Faith is what the vehemence of a soulful spiritual experience sparks and man casts his lot with. It is a spiritual breakthrough-man breaking out of human limitations and breaking into the infinitude of the Divine. Nothing then blocks the Vision of a man of Flaming Faith- the Jnana (gyaana).

THE INTEGRATED SURGE FORWARD

So you are an aspirant, a jijnaasu (श्जज्ञासु). Inspired by jijnaasaa-the human spirit of query, quest and jnaana-you aspire after the higher values of life, self-fulfilment and self- realization.

You are like anybody else. You live as circumstances demand or permit. One fine morning you begin to lose interest in life. Your temperament, habits, even demeanour change-a new personality is as if on its way. .....

You are unquiet, full of tension. The feeling of missing something in life makes you restless. What's it that you miss? No idea. Sometimes a longing to meet someone churns up your mind. Somewhere somebody is waiting for you-this is often on your mind. When and where and whom to meet? Alas, that eludes you.

Your friends notice the change. They call you a philosopher, a cynic, a man of moods. Whether they are nice and kind or indifferent, their behaviour hurts you. Tears well up in your eyes, for no apparent reason. You feel lonely-sort of forsaken. Is it a prostration of the spirit? Hard to say anything. Seemingly the grief doesn't belong to this world-for nothing on earth alleviates your suffering. Right in the midst of boisterous gaieties and many a hearty laughter of the friendly crowd around-you become suddenly sad and find it hard to choke down tears. Alas!

Your vacant looks, insipid expression and listless behaviour leave us wondering. Are you in love? Not that we know of? Despite it all, when needed you work surprisingly hard for any good cause.

No bother, nor any wrangling, you want to be left alone. Though sometimes struck by a mystifying stupor, you are, most of the time, alive and alert and know what's happening around. Otherwise, too, nothing odd about your behaviour-it is human, humanly normal.

A saint's life-story sends a thrill up your spine. Whenever God is mentioned, there is a merry twinkle in your eyes. That shows interest. It is there. But you are not sure of anything.

This state of your mind, intellect and the self is best described by the word udaasinataa (उिससनता). Having broken away from the traditional moorings you are adrift. In quest of horizons unknown? The vision is blurred. That goes to make you udaasa (उिस), all the time given to udaasinataa. You are udaasin (उिसी)- Now in India the Udaasin (or simply Udaasi) happens to be an Order of

the Hindu mystics and sadhus. To me, however, it is a state of the human mind, intellect and the self sublime. At this level of awareness, you assess and reassess the values of life in the light of the new stance and changed circumstance. That inspires a spirit of query, quest and jnaana-It is jijnaasaa. You are full of it.

Nothing seems to interest you as heretofore. Gradually a vacuum is being created as never before. But that is against the law of nature. Something must be 'flowing' into if something is 'flowing' out of life. Vacuum for all time is not possible. For aught you know, you might have found a hidden treasure-trove. It could not be just a personal liking for someone-it must be sublime and something great. It is love of man and God- it is anuraaga (अनुराग).

Now anuraaga and viraaga (प्रवराग) are the two sides of the same coin-that of bhakti (the path of love of man and God). So far you have been only given to yourself and to the things on earth, now you feel like giving yourself to God as well. Because of it your life changes, along with it the stance too. You are now given to viraaga-i.e., you are a Viraagi. The Viraagi is one who aspires to share himself with all, with the Lord too.

Friend! Again it too so happens that in India the members of an Order of the Hindu mystics and sadhus are known as Viraagis. If you don't feel like, please don't don the odd robes of a Viraagi. For, viraaga is a state of the mind, intellect and the heart that helps man to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's. Live it.

There! You are a small speck of a man standing hands upraised, face upturned-striving to envision the divinity dawn on the human horizon. Difficult to define any phenomenon- communion with divinity is not easy either. Eyes whether wide open or closed, you cannot glimpse the Lord. Nor can you surmise or divine where the quest shall ultimately lead.

Your mind, intellect and the self do try to take you across the rough and tough terrain of Yama-niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. But finding the ascendancy of the human spirit beyond its ken, the mind so often falls back awe-struck. It is at the end of its tether. That sets you thinking of coordination and cooperation for spiritual growth and self-enlightenment.

Aspirant! Turn to the Lord, the Infinite Being. Worship Him with solemnity, love, devotion. Let Him always be your first choice, the first preference. Drop all

adornments. Be yourself. No sacred signs, no mystic vision? Please wait and see. Just continue worship sublime till yoga vibhutis-the psychic powers - begin to become an integral part of your life. They are born of Yajna*-the transcendent worship.

Now what's the bother? Do the helter skelter thoughts

Yajna is wrongly translated as sacrifice: Yajna is worship (जिन).

leave you non-plussed? Do the unruly passions play havoc with the sacred fires burning in your heart? Do the scepticism and the ungodly apathy ride rough shod over your sentiments and beliefs? Do the carnal desires crowd in upon you to elbow out the noble resolves? Do the wily temptations wink on the sly and lure you away to their pleasure chambers? No respect for human decency? No regard for the sense of divine decorum a hard-won prize on the cultural and spiritual front?

Friend! Step up. Boldly face the challenge of an irresponsible mind and its vagaries. Probably it is fighting a rearguard action to stall spiritual growth. No horse was ever born so unruly, yet so amenable as the human mind. Seeker, hold on.

Alert and quick - lasso the mind. As you break a horse break your psyche. When amenable, put between its teeth a bit-that of the mantra japa or a solemn prayer of fewer words. Saddle it with righteous thoughts, divine aspirations, human graces, and noble deeds.

Ready for the journey ahead? Friend! Before you gallop off let me give you a proud send-off. You are a fine horseman- truly human, in control of yourself and in quest of the Truth Absolute. That brings you to the very doorsteps of naathatva- the self-command. Jijnaasaa, udaasinataa. viraaga and now naathatva-they are the first four vital steps that you take and these are the first four milestones on the sacred path of self- realization.

So now you are a Naatha-a man of self-command and an earnest seeker. Again it so happens that the members of another Order of the Hindu mystics and sadhus are known as Naathas.

Seeker! For sublimation of a wayward life and its raw passions-the path of tyaaga (,त्याग renunciation), tapah, titikshaa, yoga and jnaana is a sacred legacy from the ancient sages and seers. Follow it. For Kundalini-awakening* and the

opening up of the psychic spiritual centres-the chakras-take to the yoga way of life and Jnaana. Lest you should falter and misuse your psychic powers, be guided by a guru.

Nobody can be born a human being unless his Kundalini is already awakened and psychic working-receiving and sending out energy. The question is only of self-improvement. Ma of self-improvement-it is his privilege.

To go on-the spiritual experiences vary from time to time and from person to person. No two spiritual experiences are ever of the same potential and relevance. What flows from them depends on the seeker's karmas (past and persent) and the spiritual advancement. The ascendancy of the human spirit-the state of samadhi in the present context-uplifts you mentally morally and spiritually and brings you to the very threshold of self-fulfilment. While on the path of God- realization, sometimes you face an awesome surge forward of water*.

At this level of spiritual growth-as you pray for mercy and grace you hear many a voiceless clap of thunder and envision divya (celestial) flashes. Not long after-in the pre- dawn twilight of your vision, you see yourself walking on the billowy waters.....on to the Saviour. Oh, the splash of a blissful glow on your whole face! Light and shadow now play hide and seek-Sometimes, it's rather dark, very dark indeed. Sometimes, the dusky twilight is startled into radiance sublime by a blissful Face of Light. Sometimes, it is as if a soul-searching twilight. Sometimes, what you envision is the soulful Eye of Shiva, the Lord of whatever is.....Sometimes, the twilight deepens into a wistful restless night. Sometimes, it merrily twinkles like the morning star on the human horizon.

Sometimes, the deepening darkness is as if of a sorrowful nightfall. At times, the sunshine is as if of many a blissful sun ashine..... Time and time again, ever and anon, there are unheard deafening thunder claps followed by divya dazzling lightning flashes..... With the spontaneity of a heard divine communication what flashes then into view** is a Maha-vyahriti. One by one, one and all glimmer into view. They are: Om (ॐ), Bhuuh (भुउह), Bhuvah (भुवः), Svah (स्वाहा), Mahah (महा), Janah (जनः), Tapah (तपः), Satyam (सत्मि्), Om (ॐ).

You are awesomely serene, and blissfully mystified. In a

Not water as such but the ultimate essence of water-jala-tattva-of the visions sublime. In dreams it is water-but in spiritual visions it is jala tattva. In the dreams man usually flies high above the water surface, but in a spiritual vision man walks on the wavy sea.

No vision, only an awareness sublime.

trance-like state you first envision then mentally utter: Om Bhuuh, Om Bhuvah, Om Svah, Om Mahah, Om Janah, Om Tapah, Om Satyam*. Oh, the bliss of a sense of self-fulfilment and the ascendancy of the human spirit!.....

Here! I am back with you. For some time you could transcend the mind and be in a transcendental state of a higher mind. You were in full command of the senses and their petty dimensions.....

Ahead! An awe-inspiring silence reigns supreme**. The silence speaks! And you hear it in the silence absolute. Certainly it is the Voice of the Silence***. It is Anaahata Naada (BEE). (Down the centuries -the world of the bhaktas and the mystics has been familiar with this time-honoured word Anaahata Naada.)

The Anaahata Naada chimes in the melody of divine awareness that cheers up even a "dark night of the soul." The melody so chimed in reminds us of Lord Krishna's flute-the very much sought after joy of the solemnly devoted hearts and minds.

The miraculous Voice of the Silence uplifts you and your inmost being into the realms wherein the potential of the silence is great. You are in the making of a Sannyaasi-i. e., you are being taken care of by the sannyaasa-vritti.... Rising from the sannyaasa-vritti, the transcendental human spirit of renunciation is already metamorphising itself into an absolute surrender to the Lord-in spite of the limitations of your being a finite being.

Again it so happens that in India the members of another Order of the Hindu mystics and sadhus are known as Sannyaasis. To me, however, the sannyaasa-vritti is an integrated surge forward of the sublime foursome: jijnaasaa, udaasinataa,

The chanting or contemplation of the Maha-vyahritis in the form of this mantra is very helpful for spiritual growth and mantra- siddhi. To me it is as spiritually vibrant as the Gayatri, though at a different level.

** I am trying to re-live those rare moments of sublime perception and divine visions.

*** How about my naming it "the Voice of the Voiceless" as a poet has done it?

viraaga and naathatva. It inspires an initiative, creative and sublime, for treading the hallowed path of God-realization.

Last! I have talked of the four Orders of the Hindu mystics and sadhus. Severally and jointly they are great and worthy of reverence. Let us pay our respects to them in all solemnity. While treading the path of yoga, I always felt inspired by the sacred foursome and its noble traditions. To me they symbolize the four leading vrittis* of the men-in-quest that impel them onto self-realization.

The four vrittis are: (i) Udaasa-vritti, (ii) viraaga-vritti, (iii) naatha-vritti and (iv) sannyaasa vritti. Inherent in them and at the back of them all is jijnaasaa, the eternal human spirit of query, quest and jnana.

Aspirant! Live all the vrittis singly and jointly thus:

(1) Udaasa-vritti: Constantly assess and re-assess the values of life and aspire to live meaningfully and purposefully.

(2) Viraaga-vritti: Earn to live. Let neither the earning nor the living become a blind passion and an absolute obsession. Live responsibly and act in good faith that God guides our footsteps!

(3) Naatha-vritti: Be the master (naatha) and not a slave (daasa) to your desires. That is the way to become self- possessed, selfless and humanly dignified.

(4) Sannyaasa-vritti: Hold in trust for the Lord what you have. Earn by laudable means and expend that with a full sense of responsibility, both human and divine.

Live it all in all solemnity and you will one day be the man of vision and God-realization.

PRANAYAMA AND YOGA SADHANA

When you take to yoga sadhana, you begin with Pranayama. Though a dimension of the mind, it starts with the body.

• The vritti is the mood, the stance, the attitude; a thought-process. It moves man to feel,

In the beginning Pranayama is just breath control. Later it tackles chitta-vritti, the thought force. That uplifts you higher into the realms of Prana, the vital life-force.

You progress spiritually as Pranayama becomes an integral part of your meditation, your yoga sadhana. What you experience in the beginning is mostly

at the physical level. Sometimes the hands flutter and there is a sporadic movement of the arms. As you progress in the field of Pranayama, flutterings of the hands and the sporadic movements of the arms beget themselves the rhythm of life and become yoga mudras-the yogis aspire to.

Sometimes there is a chattering of the teeth and the like. Sometimes there is a movement of the head and the whole body moves backward and forward-sideways too. At times you perspire and feel all over the body an uneasy warmth. Because of it you rub your face, head, the whole body as uneasiness becomes greater....

There is a tremor of the body-jerks even. Occasionally the whole body shakes and shivers because of a sudden upsurge of spiritual verve.... Sometimes there are convulsions and the tears relentlessly flow. Emotions rising from unknown depths of a heart have a lot to do with many a mystic experience....

Sometimes the body twists and twines and man groans as if in great agony. Suddenly he calms down... is wreathed in smiles as if in some blissful presence. Many, very many ecstatic situations and the like. ... Maybe because of them or by the grace of God the aspirant so often finds himself in tune with the rhythm of life. He is then in an ecstasy sublime with a tingling heavenly glow on his face...

(I should not go on saying it all in so many words. I should instead expect you, dear aspirant, to experience it all and much more to know what is it to be in tune with the rhythm of life or being blessed by the Infinite Being.)

Still; as you progress in the field of Pranayama and advance spiritually, you are likely to become a man of vision: Revelations startle you into a firmer belief that God is! And you solemnly realize that man is capable of self-fulfilment, and God-realization is within his province.

Sometimes in the blissful quiet of deeper ecstatic meditation you hear Anaahata Naada-the mystic voice of the silence. Experience it to know the vitals of Pranayama and Yoga Sadhana in terms of wholesome growth and wholistic (purna) progress. Radically it indicates the beautiful moments of your being in tune with the dynamic rhythm of life. The rhythm of life is a vision of bliss and beauty that the yogis experience as creative serenity and dynamic tranquillity-the Vedic Shaantih. Know it to know the vitals of the mystic utterance: Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.

As Pranayama and the yogic sadhana go on-now and then there is an inner urge to take to seemingly meaningless modes of worship and what not. Have no

qualms about practising them, nor any doubts-do take to them. To know of their dynamics is neither possible nor essential. (It is a new world of symbols and symbolism that you find yourself in at this stage.) Often this compelling urge sends you in search of the Masters-men of visions, wisdom and spiritual stamina from the proverbial Himalayan heights and caves thereon.

Whatever is; let pride not come in the way of your visiting saints and sages wherever they be...in or outside the everyday world of yours... (Here is a call from within now to leave this world of mystics and masters alone; and I abide by it.).....

A stage is now set for a welcome change. Though living and meditating as before, you are restlessly aware of new energy gushing forth. The body-in a bid to adapt itself to the changed condition-rises to the occasion and readily canalises the thus released spiritual verve through one chakra or another; as and when needed. As a result thereof the vivified chakras start functioning more adequately, though differently. That means a lot more restlessness. Despite it all, please go on for greater achievements in this newfound world of spiritual endeavour (titiksha) and creative fervour (tapah).

Your everyday life now gets a new dynamic psychic stance. That gives you vision, mystic insight and many a psychic power (siddhi). An inadvertant use of any spiritual power re-assures you mentally and makes you conscious of the power of meditation, your sadhana. Your endeavour has not been wasteful-now you feel comfortable about it. And you follow the hallowed path of seekers and saints with greater deter-mination-full of hope and animated by the buoyancy of the spirit.

To warn: According to, say my own experience-like the breathing of a healthy person, the functioning of the chakras is a natural process. Meddle with it at your peril-unless you are luckily guided by a real good experienced spiritual guide.

Now I, on my part, would like to leave it at that.

I easily may-but not easy for you to do that. For you would now invariably like to speak of your spiritual exploits and experiences. Sometimes you do that to overawe the people around. (Alas, it is not easy to forego ego and egotism so soon.) But most of the time you want to reassure yourself that you are not given to hallucinations.

So often the Wise One, the One and Only, graciously steps in at this stage to throw you in the company of revered saints and sages. They just appear from nowhere. That does not mean that you should not seek like-minded people for affirmation. At no time, and at no level man can afford to become an island unto himself. Life is one integrated whole, there can be no isolation....

Friend in spirit and in aspiration! Meditate the Eightfold Path of Yoga way.

Pranayama is an integral part of it. Start with low notes, if you may, but do end up with strong overtones of divinity. The farmer ploughs the land, waters it and sows seeds. How does the seed come to life? That is not within his province to determine or manage. The tiller of the soil only creates favourable conditions for the seed to sprout and grow. You do the same for God-realization.

Live with faith. That will give you something to fall back upon and stand on-if at any time you feel altogether lost or at the crossroads.

Follow the hallowed path of seekers and the saints and live life fully and not in parts. Do right. Be right. Aspire right. Have the right intent, the right stance and live rightly.

PRANAYAMA MANTRA FOR SADHANA

Aspirant! Sit down in any convenient posture-ready for the pranayama-mantra sadhana. Prefer Padma-asana, Siddha- asana or the Vajra-asana. Better sit, out in the open, where the air is fresh and invigorating. Early dawn is the proper time, but rather than not to sit at all any time is good enough.

What is Pranayama? Pranayama is to control breath through puraka, kumbhaka and rechaka. Puraka is to inhale. Kumbhaka is to hold the breath after inhalation. Rechaka is to exhale, when to hold the breath becomes uncomfortable. The operative part of Pranayama is kumbhaka, the vital pause. The duration of the vital pause is to be increased gradually.....

Now the mantra:

ॐ भूः ॐ भुवः ॐ स्वः ॐ महः ॐ जनः ॐ तपः ॐ सत्मि् ।

Om Bhuuh, Om Bhuvah, Om Svah, Om Mahah, Om Janah, Om Tapah, Om Satyam.

Please do not concern yourself with the meaning of the mantra-What truly matters to me, and it should matter to you also, are the vibrations produced

when a mantra is chanted or contemplated. A devotional frame of mind helps develop the needed stance.

Now; inhale gently. No duress whatever. Hold your breath for a while. Exhale when uncomfortable. While holding the breath, mentally chant or contemplate the mantra as many times as is comfortable.

Before chanting or contemplating the pranayama-mantra, chant, or contemplate, the Gayatri. I know it from personal experience that it is better so. First chant or contemplate the Gayatri. A short pause and chant or contemplate the pranayama-mantra. A short pause and do the chanting or the contemplation of the Gayatri. This is one round of sadhana. Repeat.

A great sadhana indeed!

PRANAYAMA MANTRA AS PRAYER

Friend! Here is the Pranayama Mantra that Shukla Yajurveda enunciates: Let it be a part of your daily prayer:

ॐ भुः ॐ भुवःॐ स्वः ॐ महः ॐजनःॐ तपः ॐ सत्मि्ॐ तत्सप्रवतुवरेयण्ि ुं ,ि्

भगो ेवस्धीमदह धधिो ेनः प्रचिोात्,ि् ॐ प्रापो ज्ियितरसोऽमृतृ ुंब्रह्मभूभुवयः स्वरोम् ि्।

: Om Bhuuh Om Bhuvah Om Svah

Om Mahah Om Janah Om Tapah

Om Satyam, Om Tat Savitur-varenyam Bhargo

Devasya Dhimahi Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayaat, Om

Aapo Jyoti Raso-amritam

Brahma Bhuur-bhuvah Svarom!

It has 59 syllables:

(1) Seven Maha-vyahritis; each

preceded by one Pranava (ॐ)……19

(2) Gayatri preceded by one Pranava……..24

(3) Shirah (सशराह)preceded

andfollowedbyPranava……..16

Total: 59

THEHINDU

A Hindu is unique in the sense that*: (i) inborn in him is the firm belief thathisDharma has for

This article was inspired by my talk with a revered saint whom I met in Bombay (India). That was many years ago, sometime in the late sixties. What he said was in response to my random query: "You have been all over the world. What do you think of an aver- age Hindu?"

He gave a beautiful smile and spoke with a serene and smiling glow on his face.

Every word inspired,
for he had the power to Convince born of his convictions.
him hopeful prospects-no fear of long oblivion, utter annihilation or eternal damnation, but an assured future divine and an undying hope for a blissful reunion (मोक्ष moksha) with the Benevolent One;

(ii) there is enough reassuring in his Dharma to give him comfort, courage, hope and faith to smile away his fears in any hour of agony or distress, death even-for he is truly comfor- table in his belief that he will come back, better prepared, to live another life;

(iii) to him life here in this world is neither a banishment nor a punishment, but is a blissful Leelaa* (, play)-to live life fully in a spirit of sportsmanship and, when the time is up, to quit the arena gratefully;

(iv) he believes not only in the Law of Karma but also in himself being, to a large extent, the master of his own destiny; hence no irresponsible, asocial, and unmanlike deeds but only what Dharma enunciates noble, moral and spiritual;

(v) with a spirited pride and full of confidence sublime that the sacred Vedas inspire, he mingles his voice with that of the Buddha to declare unequivocally: "My doctrine is like unto the heavens, for there is room in it, ample room, for the reception of all, for men and women, boys and girls, the powerful and the lowly;

"my doctrine is like the ocean, both the ocean and my doctrine become gradually deeper, both cast out dead bodies upon the dry land."

* Ask any Hindu and he would say unequivocally: "The whole universe and whatever is happening in it is the Leelaa (m) of the Lord." Shrug your shoulders and ask again but he would once again say: "Whatever was, is, and will be is Bhagwan's (the Lord's) Leelaa."

As you turn away still uncertain, he, in his turn, would shrug his shoulders and look at you as if to say: "How strange? This man does not know this much even."

A Hindu believes in the VEDA (वि)*-That which was, is, and will eternally be revealing ITSELF to the pure in heart and enlightened in spirit as a transcendental thought or value.

(ii) A Hindu believes in God being the One and Only.

"Only the learned describe Him," he says, "in many a way and manner. The saying is: एकुं सद् प्रवप्रा बहुधा विश्न्त Ekam sad vipraa bahudhaa vadanti.

(iii) A Hindu seeks blessings and direction from the Kindly Lord not only for himself but also for every being and all (both animate as animate as well as inanimate)-because his daily prayer is:

ॐ भूभुवयः स्वः तत्सप्रवतुवरेयण्ुंभगो ेवस्धीमदह ।

धधिो ो नः प्रचोात् ॥

Om Bhuur-bhuvah Svah Tat Savitur-varenyam Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi!

Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayaat!!

Being aware of the glorious splendour of the Kindly Lord, we pray to the divine Most High: Inspirit, inspire and fire our hearts and minds with the right initiative and fill our beings with a creative zeal-prime, abiding and supreme- to act in consonance with the true human spirit.

(The Gayatri.)

(iv) Inspired by a spirit of universal love, a Hindu believes in praying for the well-being of all. His prayar is:

सवे भवन्तु ुसुखिनः

सवे सन्तु यनरामिाः

सवे भद्राखण पश्न्तिु ु

मा कश्श्वद् ुिःुिभावभवेत् ु।।

Sarve bhavantusukhinah

Sarve santu niraamayaah!

Sarve bhadraani pashyantu

Maa kashchid dukha bhaaga bhavet!!

• Veda's essence is divinity-eternally solemn and sublime. When lived by man it is truly hu essentially divine.

May one and all be happy and in comfort!

May one and all be happy and in good health!

May one and all do well and be happy!

May one and all be blissfully free from anxiety, want and suffering!

(v) A Hindu believes in being and becoming deeply humane and truly human-for he says:

अि ुंयनजः परो वेयत गणना लघुचेतसाम् ु।

उिरचररताना ुंतु ुवसुधैव कुटुभबकम् ु।।

Ayamnijahparoveti gananaalaghuchetasaam!

Udaaracharitaanaam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam!!

Only a small-minded person thinks of someone being his own and another a mere nobody. A person with a broader vision is inspired by a sense of belonging to the family of man and the whole universe.

(vi) Beautifully inspiring and spiritually dynamic istheHindu prayer:

असतो मा सद् गमि ।

तमसो मा ज्ीयितर् ुगमि ।

मृत्ोमा यअमृतृ ुंगमि ।।

Asato maa sad gamaya!

Tamaso maa jyotir gamaya!

Mrityor maa amritam gamaya!

O Lord!

Lead me from the unreal to the Real!

Lead me from darkness to Light!

Lead me from the transient ( ) to the Eternal ( ) That is!

(vii) Here is how the Rig Veda (I-89-i) gives a new dimension to human thought:

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो ि न्तु प्रवश्वतः ।

Aa no bhadraah kratavo yantu vishvatah!

For our good let anybody make us wiser about how we should plan and what we should aspire to do.

No pride, no prejudice, no fanaticism either-an open mind instead, ready to welcome helpful thoughts from anywhere.

(viii) Again here is what the Rig Veda says:

ससिाः क्रतुम् ्इच्छत ।

Sakhaayah kratum ichhata! Friend! Aspire after a noble way of life (Dharma), right judgment (Viveka) and a deeper understanding of Truth (Jnana).

That is exactly what a Hindu desires when he prays for sumati (सुमयत, good mind and saintly disposition).

(ix) A Hindu is truly at peace and essentially hopeful of not being doomed to an ignominious end. He is essentially an optimist because of the Saviour Krishna's solemn affirmation:

ग्गि ि दह धमस्यि वलायनभवययत भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधमस्यि तिाऽऽत्मान ुंसृजाभ्हिम् ्।।

पररत्राणिा साधूना ुंप्रवनाशिा च ुिषुकृताम् ्।

धमसयसुंथापनाथिाय सभभवासम ुिगे ुिगे ।।

Yadaa-yadaahidharmasyaglaanirbhavati Bhaarata!

Abhyutthaanam adharmasya taddaa atmaanam srijaamyaham!!

Paritraanaaya saadhunaam vinaashaaya cha dushkritaam!

Dharmasamsthaapanaarthaaya sambhavaami yuge yuge!!

O Arjun! Wherever there is a crisis of human volition and whenever men tend to stoop low and lend a sense of respec- tability to their failings and dereliction of duty (dharma)-I readily demolish the fallacies that vitiate their moral fibre and prompt and promote in their chastened hearts the buoyancy of the spirit and a resurgent faith that rehabilitates them physically, mentally, morally and spiritually!

(The Bhagvad Gita IV-7, 8)

(x) Lest men should at any time be given to fear and be tormented by a sense of

lack*, Lord Krishna declares:

अनन्ाश्श्चन्तिन्तो मा ुंिे जनाः पिुपयासते े।

तेषा ुंयनत्ासिभिुक्ताना ुंिोगक्षेम ुंवहाभिहम् ्।।

• A sense of lack, or needof something,orananxiety(angst)lestitshouldbetaken away-this is want that everybody dreads.

Anaanyaash chintayanto maam

Ye janaah paryupaasate!

Teshaam nityaabhiyuktaanaam

yogakshemam vahaamyaham!!

To those, who are always mindful of and wholeheartedly devoted to Me and Me alone, I give a sense of belonging so that they are at peace and blessed with a strong sense of direction and destiny.

(The Gita IX-22)

The very thought that I belong to the Lord is enough to fill my heart with courage, faith and hope, and it gives a healthy dimension to my everyday life.

(xi) Lest man should still feel concerned, Lord Krishna once again graciously affirms:

सवधयमान््पररत्जि् भामेकुं शरण ुंव्रज ।

अहुं त्वा सवपयापेभ्ी मोक्षयिष्ासिम मा शुचः ।।

Sarvadharmaan parityajya maam ekam sharanamvraja!

Aham tvaa sarvapaapebhyo mokshayishyaami maashuchah!!

"O Arjun! Undeterred by the everyday wranglings and determinedtotranscend whatever you are and whatever you aspire after, cometoMewith an unassailable zeal. "Have no fear, nor lament. Be assured that I shall fire your heartwiththe divine
spirit of moksha that shall neither let you sin, because of onecompulsion or another, nor let you suffer therefor."

(TheGitaXVIII-66)

Down the centuries millions and billions of peoplehavefeltreassuredand have been blessed by Lord Krishna's grace and trulyguidedbyHispositiveapproach to life and its problems.

(xii) Because of a healthy sense of restraintandafirmbeliefinallfaiths and religions being a gift divine from the OneandOnly-aHinduneverdeclares his Dharma to be the only true way of life.Hedoeshoweverreligiouslybelieve in its appeal being supreme and its relevanceuniversal.ToconfineHinduism to one homeland or another is a fallacy andawrongpremisethatishisfirm view.

Friend! The essence of Hinduism is its eternalquestforadeeperunderstanding of TRUTH (ज्ञान , jnana), its emphasis on rightconductandrightassessment (viveka,प्रववेक,), and its solemn affirmation ofthedivinityofman(वेातुं ; vedanta). Its strength lies in its preference of divinelyinspiredchoiceand in the belief that an enlightened volition guides the destinyofmankind.Because of it the Hindus so often deify (ेविता माननेे लगते हैं) theirachievements.leaders of thought and their men of great Above all, its unitydespitediversityis awe-inspiring, unique and great!

(xiii) A Hindu believes in his Dharma being sanaatana (a). What he means by this is that its tenets are eternally in consonance with the true human spirit and man's higher aspirations. That is what makes it a religion of man for all times.

As a religion of man, Hindu Dharma-mistakenly called Hinduism-was in tune with the deep musings and wild war cries of the awed early man. It has been and is relevant to the past and the present-day man's deeper predilections and higher and higher aspirations. In all probability it will as well be relavant to the as yet inconceivable sense of direction and destiny of the man of tomorrow. For, Hindu Dharma is at once divine, revealed, speculative*, down-to-earth, intuitive and transcendental. No stringent rigidity, no senseless regimentation no lack of imagination either-and no closing of its doors to anything humanly valuable or spiritually worthwhile.

Think and act truly manlike and dream and aspire to live essentially godlike-and you are a Hindu. That is how I view Hindu Dharma in brief.

A Hindu has the courage of his convictions to relate his ancient myths and mythologies to modern thought. What the soil is to a plant these myths and mythologies are to his devout way of life. Howsoever fantastic a true symbol or a myth might apparently be, even today it has and it will for ever have a vital role to play in man's growth at all levels.

Mercifully the human mind has its limitations. That is

Speculation implies reasoning about things theoretical problematic.

good because it cannot stare unimpaired into an eternity of its meanderings. Nor can it safely cleave a path through its myriad renderings-apparently speculative and imaginative but in reality purposeful, meaningful and relevant to man and his existing universe. Leaving alone some visionary enthusiasts- for survival man must have his mind, intellect and the volition rooted in something known, ponderable and familiar-lest he should be often lost in his random ramblings and the none too clear envisioning.

Aspirant! In view of man still living in mortal fear of his life, let myths, mythologies and the whole world of symbolic ideologies remain prevalent for the sake of a vast majority. No need to interfere with its beliefs till it-the vast majority- can transcend its fears and develop an indomitable spirit capable of effectively grappling with the complexities and the subtleties of life. Man, whether primitive or the socalled modern, will not perish. He shall instead

endure. A Hindu knows it and has full faith in the destiny divine of man. For him death is not the be-all and the end-all of life, but it is a solemn beginning of another span of life, the hereafter.

Again; Hindu Dharma was, is and will always be adequate to meet the challenge of life's growing process and its fulfilment in the Ultimate. Its scientific temper quickens the human intellect and man busies himself to build the world better; even anew. Its spiritual temper inspires him to discover and rediscover himself time and time again and urges him to spiritually uplift the very inmost of his being for the good of all. Of course, the VEDA-the Word of God and an eternal source of wholistic wisdom-is there to edify human aspirations. It directs man to transcend the fear of the Unknown and makes him wiser about the way to meet the challenge of his own enlightened unconscious.

Aspirant! Be true to your beliefs and religion till you outgrow the need for them and are in a blissful embrace of the Absolute, the One and Only. Name THAT what your tradition says. Contemplate THAT the way you feel inspired to. Realize IT by following the paths shown by the VEDA or the Faith you live by. On my part, I do pray to the Benevolent All-sublime to bless you with the ascendancy of the spirit and a vision divine of OM-TAT-SAT-OM-the Ultimate Absolute. OM! OM! OM! OM!

THE ULTIMATE OF ALL BELIEFS

Friend! Here is a remarkable Hindu belief that has been and shall for ever be augmenting your faith in the divinity of man and his august destiny. Pray help me render it faithfully:

The stage is set for you to deliver a sermon-it has already been announced. Many people are there. I am there too. Instead of going ahead with the usual "Ladies and gentlemen", you give a mystic stance to your dialogue by saying: "OM TAT SAT OM!"**

For quite some time you speak of God, speak of His grace and benevolence great. While you go on, I ponder deep and am soon lost in the sublimity of your words. Suddenly you stop in middle of the dialogue; you raise your voice. Your soulful voice throws me into a dynamic state of awareness and I hear you say (declare?) with the spontaneity of a divine communication: TAT TVAM ASI.***

Startled I look up! Your finger is still directed at me. Electrified and perspiring all over I shake, I shiver. The vibrating shiver rises from deep down and travels up

my benumbed spine. I feel like being bodily uplifted into space full of wordless voices.....and.....my lips slowly part by the touch of a blissful smile..... From outside myself I see it all happen..... it happens to me and I see it.....and.....I hear myself articulate time and time again: SO AHAM,**** SO AHAM, SO AHAM.....in a deep reverbrating voice.....

* For a Hindu it is not a mere belief, but has always, in truth, been an article of his faith.

** THAT WAS, THAT IS, and THAT WILL BE, WILL BE. ॐ ि् सि् ॅ ॐ । THAT THOU ART! ि् ति्मि् अवस । •••• I AM THAT! सो अहम् ।

Aspirant! I never wanted but at long last I have related an experience of my lifetime. That was long ago in the early thirties. It was at Lahore and the speaker was a Goswami..... Things miraculous do happen-that is all that I can say now....

I don't know how you would take it or respond but to me it was the ultimate of all the heard dialogues-maybe the be- all of my beliefs too. I know it is something hard to believe unless experienced.....directed.....or graced by VEDA, the Word of God..... Alas, I am falling short of words, breath too...to express what I want to convey..

There is no such thing like the end-all of anything born or come into being. Like life, faith is also a growing process; there is no finality anywhere. Godmen were, are and they will ever be, will be. That is my realization.

Dear reader, let it be. Go intent on following wherever the Word of God is spoken. Nobody can speak of and in words divine at that-unless directed...graced too.

Word of God lives to see you live THAT.

BREAK DOWN BARRIERS

My respects to whosoever leads a dedicated life. I may suggest that all saintly persons should help a man in quest of the Ultimate. Many a questing heart has been broken not because of the wrong direction given but because of guide's false pretensions.

Instead of making a fuss about the whole thing being secret, let men of faith run schools for aspirants and the seekers. The schools? They should be a common venture, not dedicated to one individual or another. The holy cause should

transcend pride and prejudice and the individual merit or demerit. To build a sound bridge between man and man, let the dedicated break down barriers which inhibit people from drawing spiritual nourishment from traditions other than their own. Let them share their spiritual experiences-not for self-assertion but for self-assurance.

In ancient India an ashrama was run as public schools are run today. Not only religion but many other sciences were taught even the art of warfare. Guru-dakshina was what tuition fee is today. Though times are different, in view of the shrinking frontiers a healthy public spirit is needed as never before. Let us respect all sects, faiths and religions. No more violence in their name or because of them. Neither lack of interest nor an indifferent attitude but a vibrant faith in religion and absolute love of it will accomplish it.

Friend! Be mindful of human dignity and divinity of man. A miracle may or may not, but your sense of responsibility, sincerity of purpose, and a spirit of dedication shall bring about change for the better ahoy. Serve people and be devoted to them instead of making them your devotees. OM!

WE MET, SHALL MEET AGAIN

How about a few words more, dear seeker, before we part. All that sought expression now stands expressed. I feel like a path along which passed, a short while ago, a cavalcade- Oh, the surprises that it sprang!

As the moving cavalcade of values and visions trotted along, my heart throbbed with dull pain. Moved as never before- I looked into the eternity of a hereafter for a revealing glimmer-Oh, the thrill that it gave.

Friend! I do wish you well. May God bless you. Man trying to arouse himself is a marvel. To be able to tread the path of self-realization is a miracle of the vision and the sense of destiny.

You are essentially human, a human being. Live your life with divine dignity. Why bother about one miracle or another to augment your faith? You yourself are a mircale of the Creation.

Aspirant! "To measure you by your deeds is to reckon the power of the ocean by the frailty of its foam. And to judge you by your failings is to cast blame upon seasons for their inconstancy." No complex, pray look up!

Love thy neighbour to love thyself. Know thyself to know thy power. Find thy faith to find thy God....

Not the last word, sir. Time and time again we shall meet, not only in the considered views of the wise ones but also in the random sayings of the unsung passers-by. OM!

OM TAT SAT OM! ॐ तत् ्सत् ्ॐ ।

ॐ तत् ् सत् ् ॐ।OM TAT SAT OM!

ॐतत् ्सत् ्ॐ।ॐ तत् ्सत् ्ॐ ॥

OM TAT SAT OM! THATWAS,THATIS

AND

THATWILLBE,WILLBE!

OM!OM!OM!OM!

A SAGE WITH A DIFFERENCE

The saints, thesages;amanofthemoment,amanoftheage-theyarevery much human,praybelieve.Theyfail,andtheyfeel.Theytriumph;ah,thejoy. Agony and itsanguishtheyarealsoinforthat.Whetherit'sGod'swillornot-sometimes theirheartsbleed.Andtheyshedtearsofblood-blood-redhuman blood-as theyondersage(facingpage)doeswhiletreadingtheNarmadariver bank.

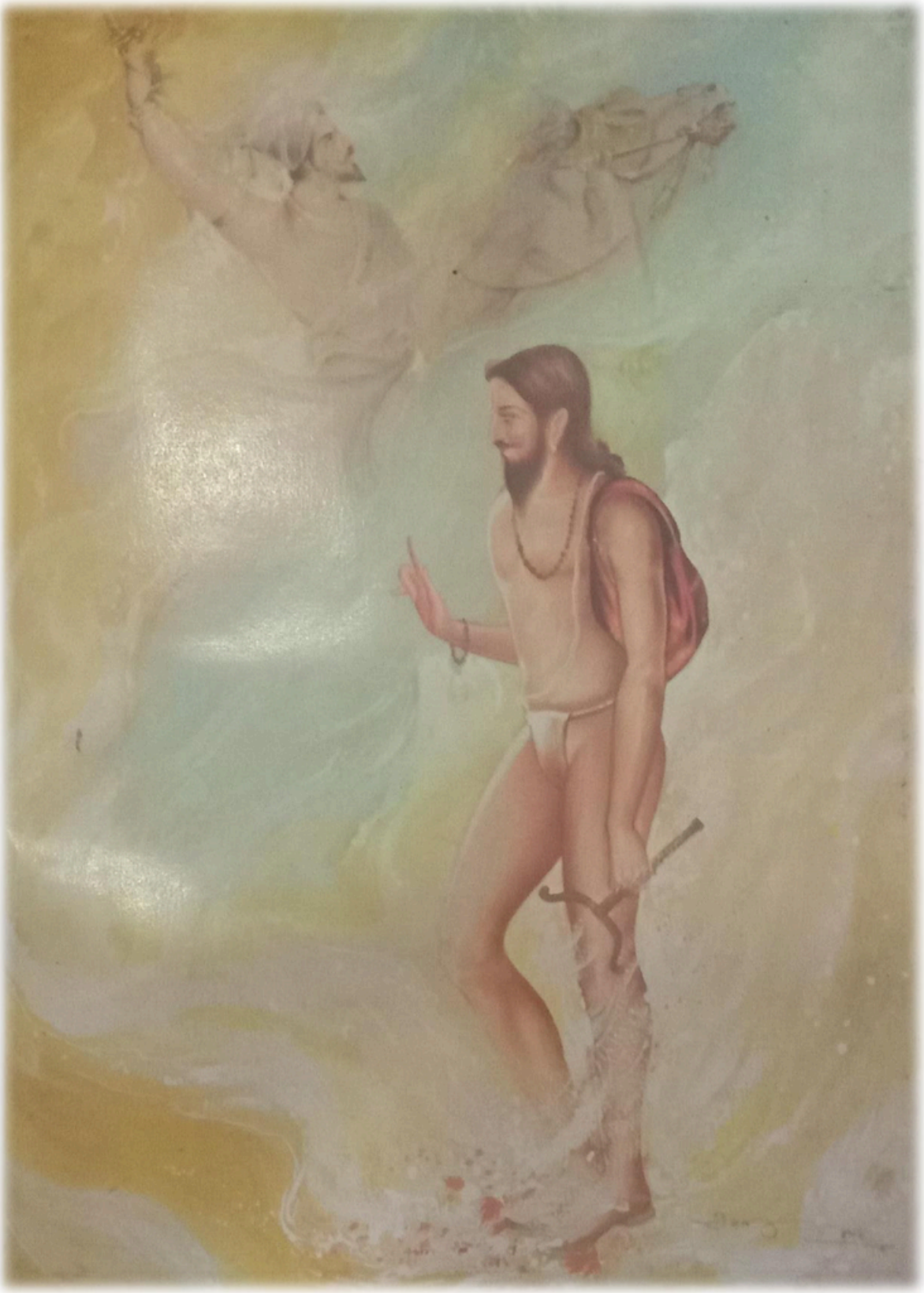
The saints,theysay,readilyacceptthewillofGod.Thisunsungunsage-likesage is, however,ratherodd.Havingsharedjoyandtheworldlycomforts,heisnow ready tosharewithhisfellowbeingstheirwealandwoe.Trulyasonofthe sacred Indiansoil-butwhoishe?

SamarthaGuruRamDasswasthesagewhoprayedandenvisionedasaviour of the thentimes.Noteasy,norhumantostandthesightofthousandsofinnocent women,menandchildrenbeingdonetodeathandthattoointhenameofGod Almighty,theOneandOnly.Aheightofinsolenceandhumandegradation.... Becauseoftheuglydeedsofinhumanmarauders-indignantandfullofwrath (मनु:)theangrygodmantooktotheriverNarmadabanks.Onlythearm-rest was hisstrong-arm.....

Friend!OntimetheProvidencefashionedthemanofthehourtomeetthe challengeofaneraofcontentions,confrontations,strifeandstruggle.Though not intheimageofthesaviorsbefore,hewastrulyaheroicpersonage.

Chhatrapati Shivaji it was whom the whole nation still remembers reverentially.
OM! OM! OM!

S.F. Need of the hour: Neither idle shirkers nor people timid at heart-but men with courage of their humane convictions.



Samartha Guru Ram Dass and Chhatrapati Shivaji